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THE NEW YORKER

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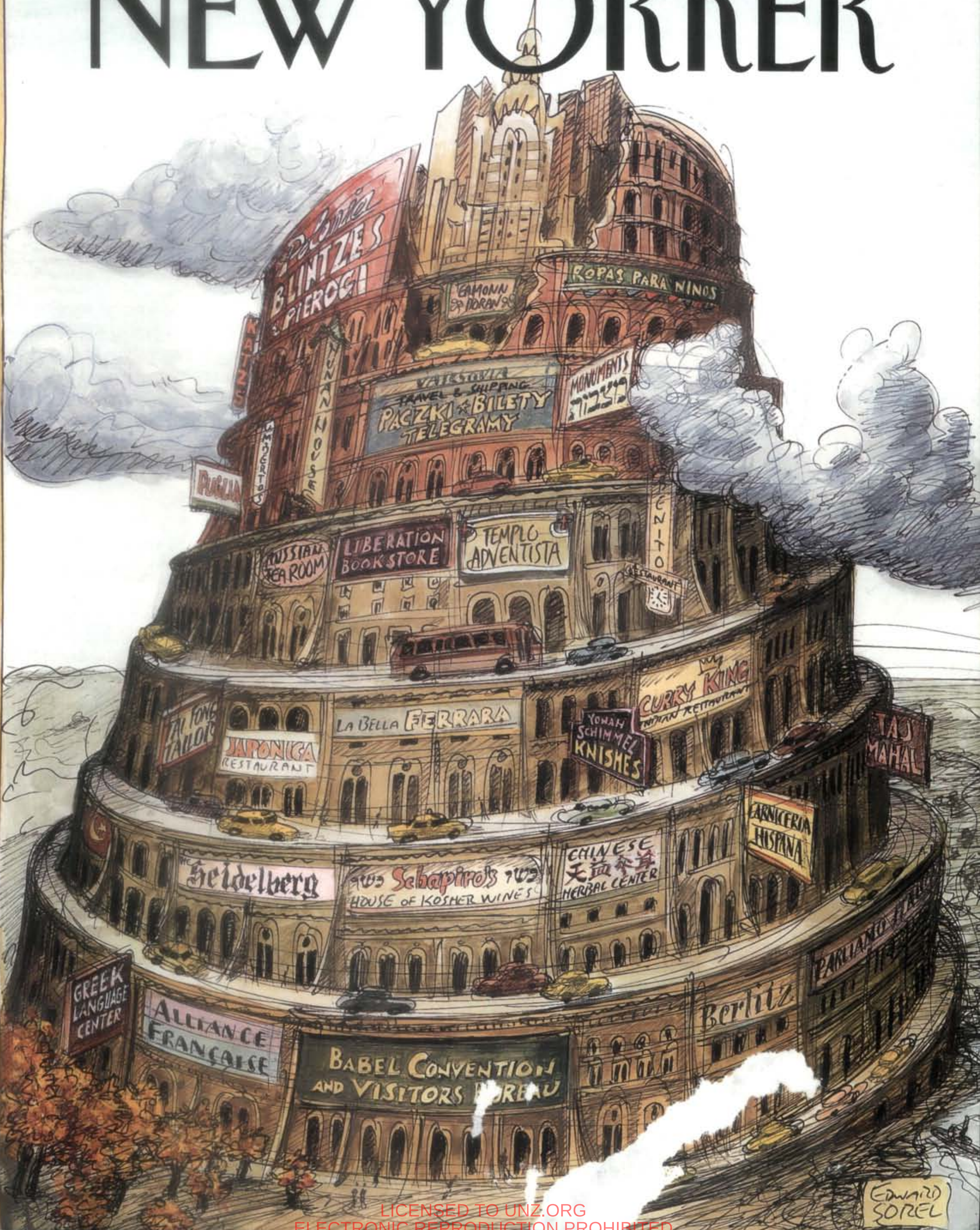
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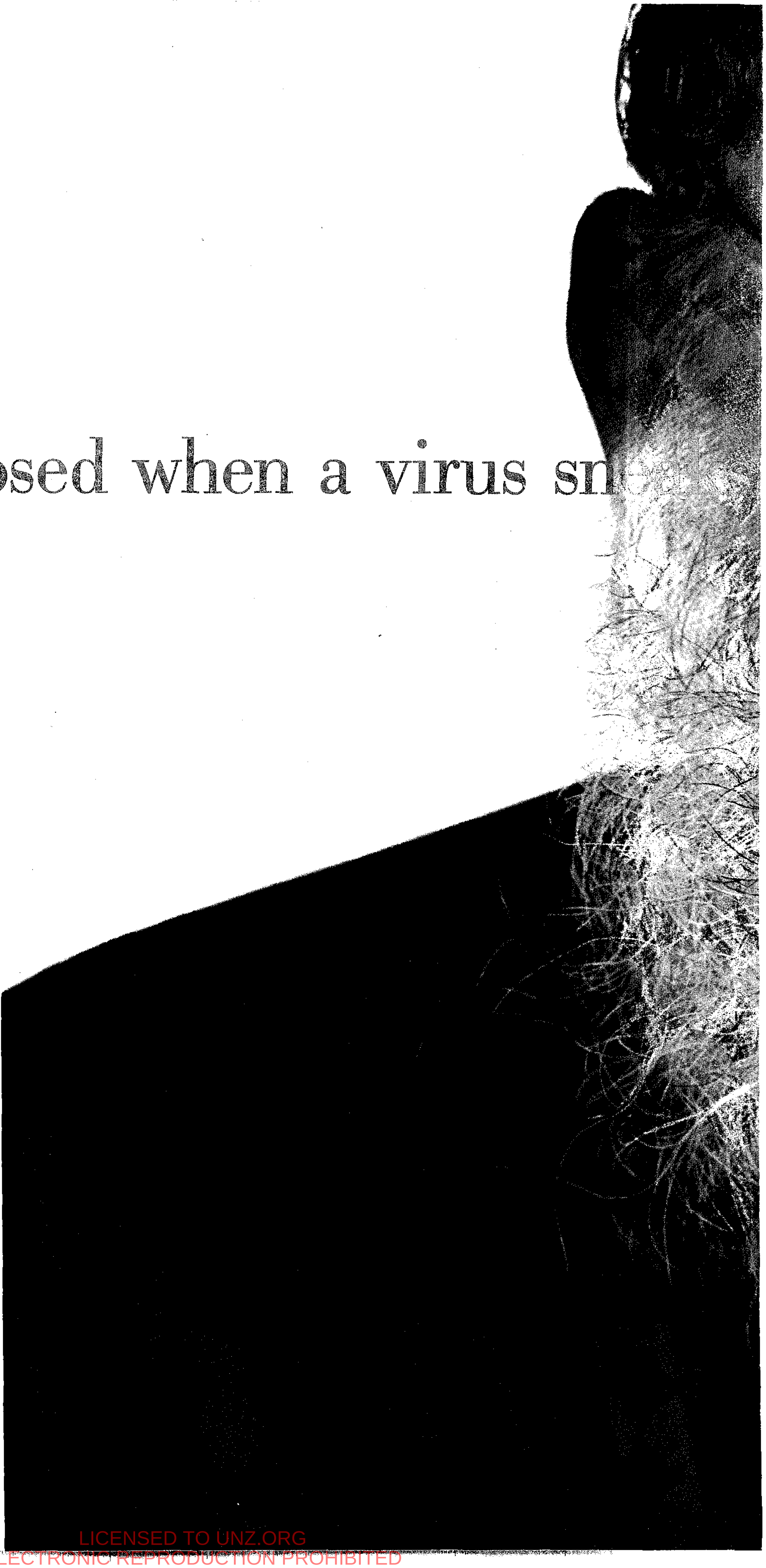

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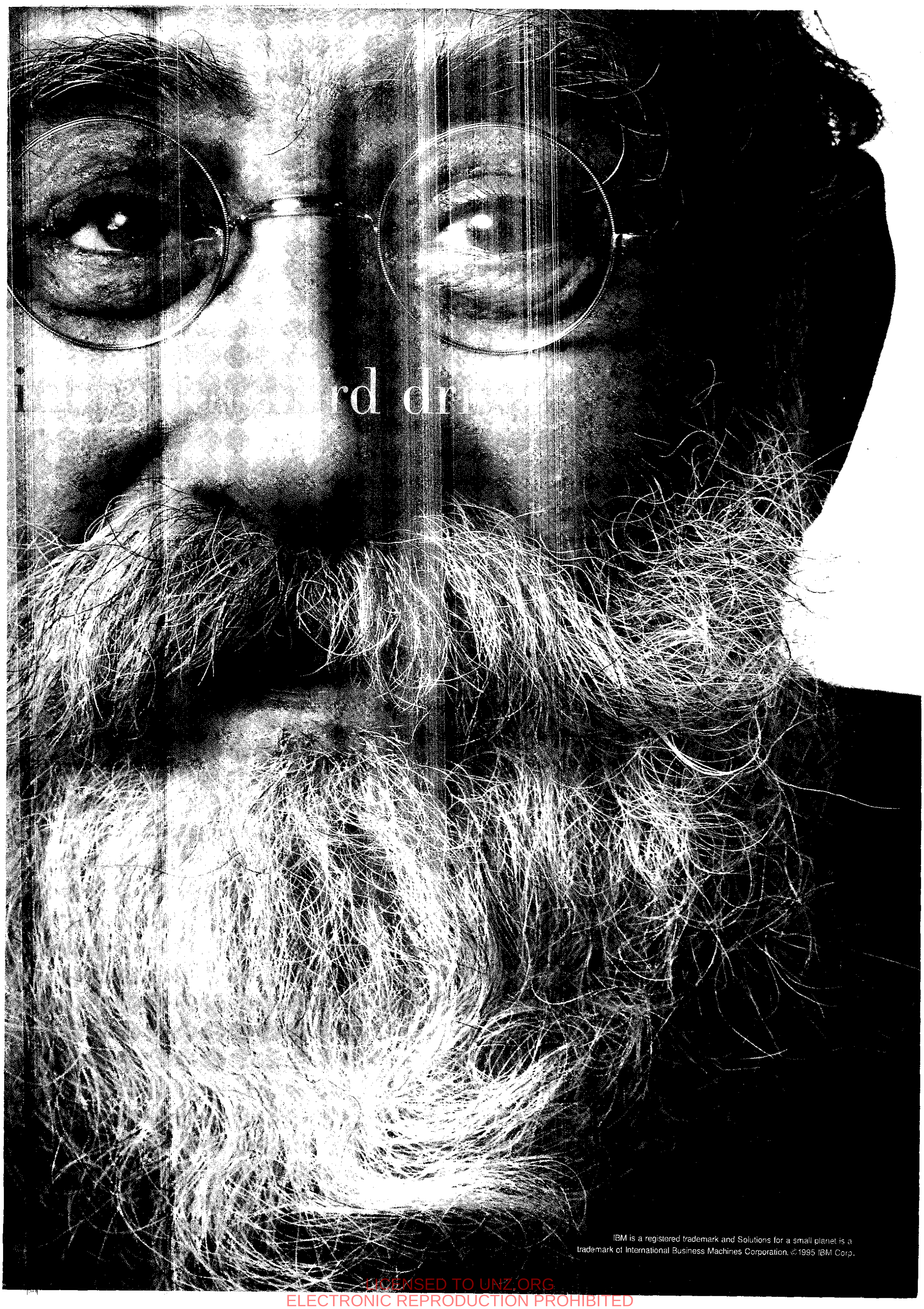

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THE NEW YORKER

OCTOBER 2, 1995

COMMENT The Scarlet "M" . . . . *Matthew Miller* 9
Poor unwed mothers pay, affluent sinners collect.

IN THE MAIL 12

GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN 16

THE TALK OF THE TOWN 35
Albright dim on Powell; Gagosian and Glimcher go West;
Timothy Leary's goodbye; Karel Reisz on Broadway; etc.

DEPARTMENTS

The Political Scene Ghost in the Machine . . . . *Sidney Blumenthal* 40
Why in the world do the Republican candidates
want to be seen as Richard Nixon's anointed heir?

Popular Chronicles Hot and Cool . . . . *Susan Orlean* 47
What do people wear during a season that's no
longer a season? Increasingly wild and insane things.

Letter from Ethiopia An African Nuremberg . . . . *John Ryle* 50
Their former leaders are on trial for past atrocities,
but Ethiopians are more worried about the future.

PERSONAL HISTORY How I Survived the Fifties . . . . *Gore Vidal* 62
A memoir of New York intellectuals, Hollywood
prophets, and the things a writer sometimes must do.

PORTFOLIO Standup Artist . . . . *Claes Oldenburg, Calvin Tomkins* 76

FICTION "Young Girl's Wish" . . . . *Amy Tan* 80
At the age of eighteen, she was made to leave
China. More than thirty years later, she returns.

THE CRITICS

Books Dinesh D'Souza's "The End of Racism" . . . . *Sean Wilentz* 91
A P.C. New Testament and Psalms . . . . *Anthony Lane* 98
Musical Events A Season of Beethoven . . . . *Paul Griffiths* 101
The Current Cinema "Devil in a Blue Dress" . . . . *Terrence Rafferty* 104
The Theatre "The Steward of Christendom" . . . . *John Lahr* 106

POEMS

"Symposium" . . . . *Paul Muldoon* 58
"The Branch" . . . . *Michael Longley* 82

SHOUTS & MURMURS Turning the Tables . . . . *Calvin Trillin* 108

COVER *I ❤ Babel, by Edward Sorel*

DRAWINGS *Richard Cline, Michael Crawford, Michael Maslin, Danny Shanahan, Frank Cotham, Frank Modell, Robert Mankoff, Sam Gross, Bernard Schoenbaum, Lorenzo Mattotti*

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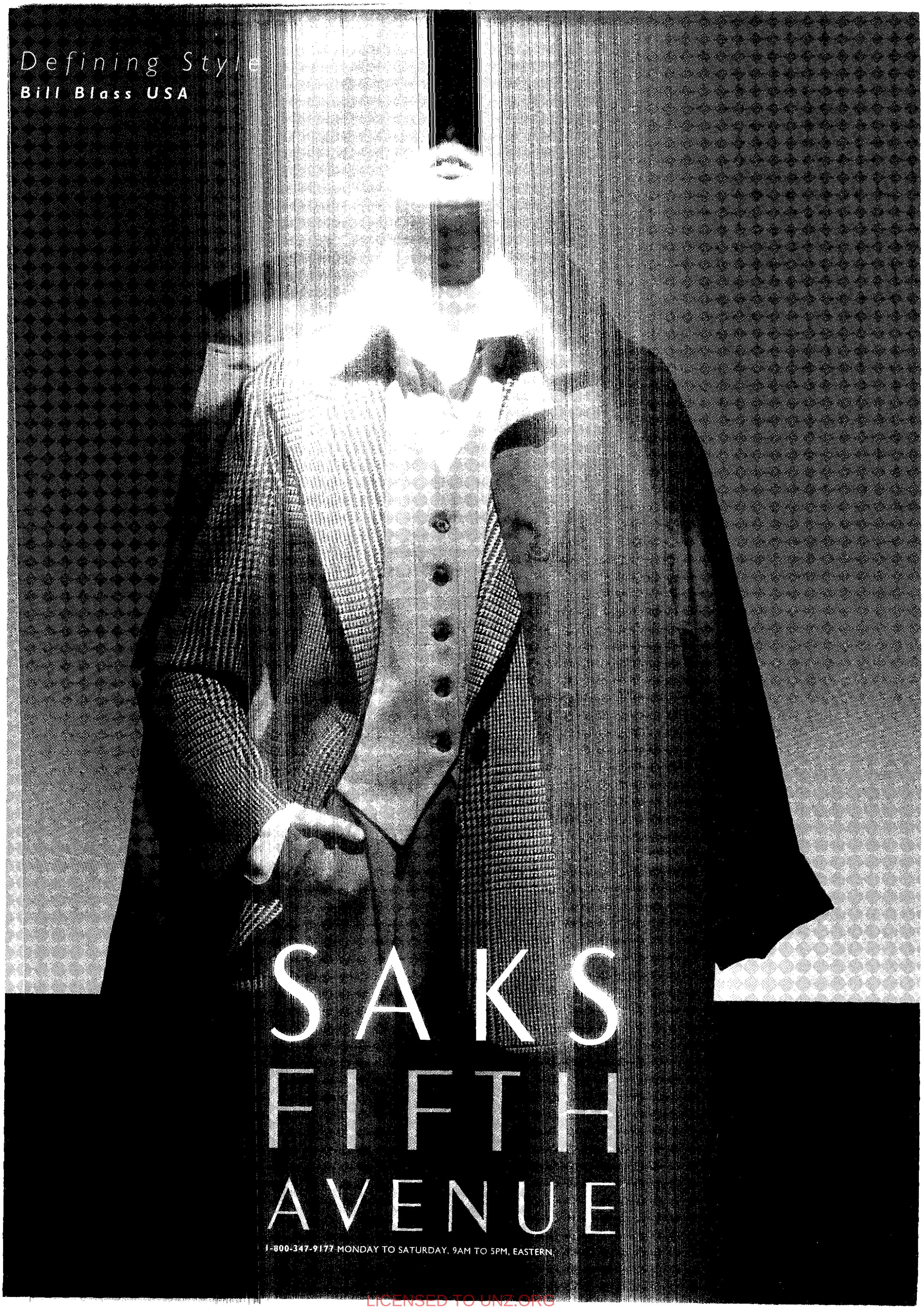
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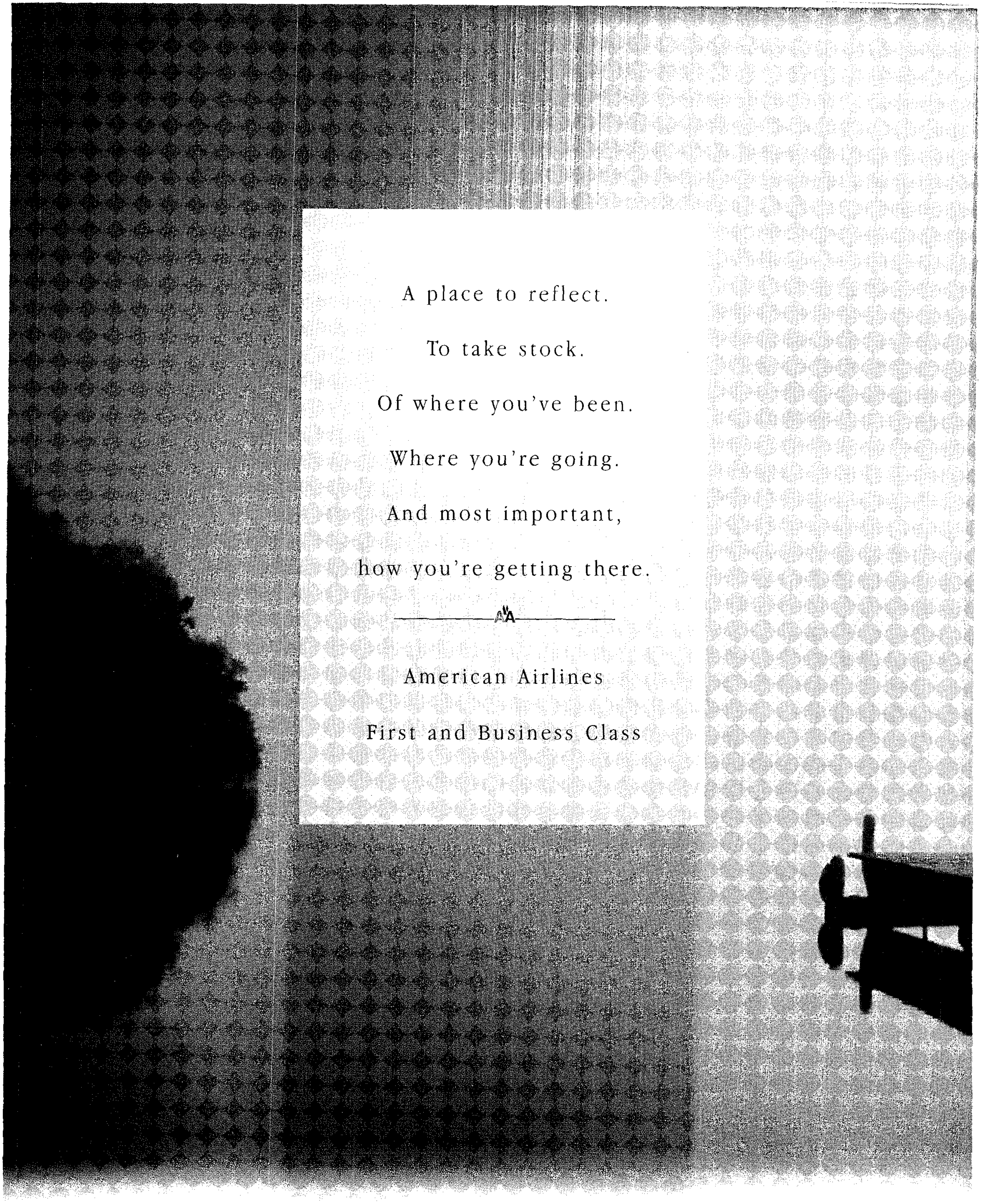

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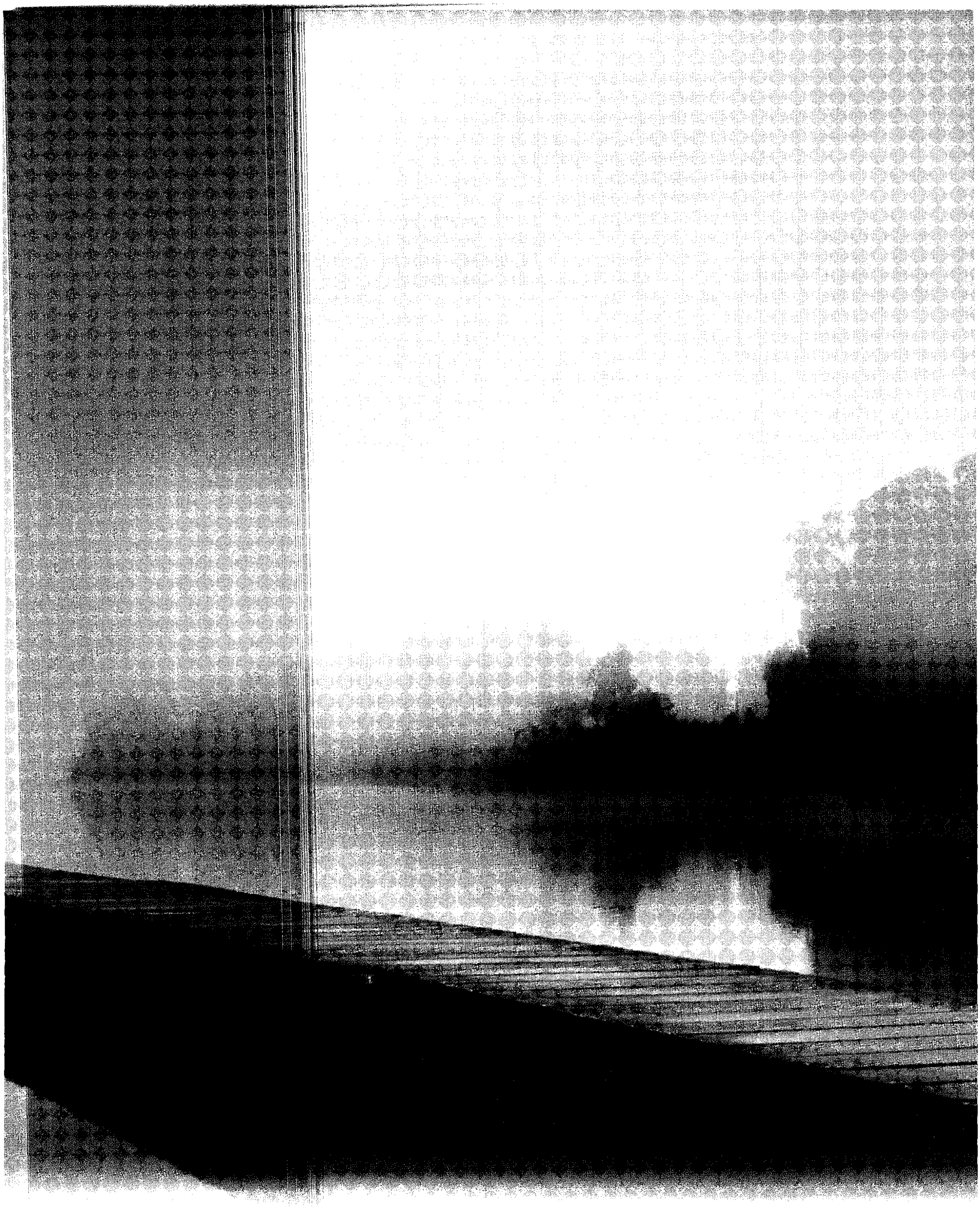

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COMMENT

THE SCARLET "M"

The mortgage-interest deduction as a badge of shame.

As we've all learned during the last few hundred days, there's nothing conservative Republicans dislike more than social engineering, except when they like it. One kind of social engineering they like a lot is the "family cap," which, though it sounds like a wholesome new kind of diaphragm, is actually a moralistic variation on China's "one child" policy: it would deny additional welfare payments to single mothers who bear more children out of wedlock. "We're subsidizing illegitimacy!" goes the battle cry from Newt Gingrich, Phil Gramm, and their followers, who believe that a good, bracing dose of economic disincentive would be just the thing to jolt poor women into tightening up their loose morals. On being pressed, the defenders of virtue may admit that if the family cap actually becomes law (the Senate last week voted to leave the choice up to the states, but the House hopes to make it mandatory in the final welfare-reform bill) millions of poor kids will go without to make sure Mom gets the point. If that's what it takes to change the culture of illegitimacy, say the virtuecrats, tough luck. Or, as they might prefer to put it, tough love.

The two hundred and fifty-nine Republican legislators who have now voted for a family cap may be right about its hoped-for effects. More likely, they may be wrong; cost-benefit analysis is seldom uppermost in the minds of impoverished teen-agers. But the only way to know whether their actions are based on principle is to see if they'll apply the same philosophy to libertines of the sort who are more apt to vote, make campaign contributions, and write op-ed pieces than are unmarried teen-age mothers living in poverty. America's twenty-eight million mortgage holders, for example, offer a ready test case for conservative consistency. It is a fact that under today's tax code the mortgage-interest deduction subsidizes divorce. When a well-off couple with a mortgage splits, and the departing husband, say, borrows to buy another house, he can deduct the interest on that second mortgage from his taxable income just as if he hadn't violated the canons of Judeo-Christian ethics and accelerated the decline of civilization. The taxpayers, you'll note, are now subsidizing two houses for this so-called family, not just one. And the cost

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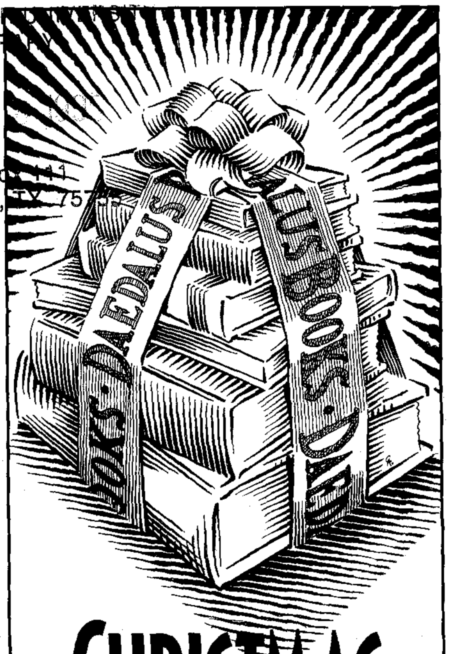

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to the taxpayers of this sinners' bonus is far from low.

How much are we pouring into the divorce subsidy? The over-all mortgage-interest deduction will cost the Treasury about sixty billion dollars in lost revenue this year. Assume, for simplicity's sake, that mortgage holders are either married or divorced, not people who have never been married. (Singles tend to be renters.) Since one out of two marriages ends in divorce, it's reasonable to suppose that half the total subsidy, or thirty billion dollars, goes to people who are no longer married to their original spouses. If half the ex-spouses buy second homes with Uncle Sam's help, then half of this thirty billion dollars, or fifteen billion dollars a year, is bankrolling the infrastructure of broken marriage. To be sure, this is a rough figure, even an exaggerated one, but inside the Beltway it's inside the ballpark. And, as it happens, fifteen billion dollars is also the amount of federal money that goes to single mothers via the Aid to Families with Dependent Children program—a coincidence that makes the comparison as close as we're likely to get to a laboratory test of the consistency of conservative values. So far, the test is coming up negative. At one end of the income scale, the Republican budget plan eliminates the sixty-year-old federal guarantee of subsistence support for poor mothers, virtuous and licentious alike, and their children (while at the same time cutting back on frills like clean air, student loans, and scientific research). At the other end, because the revenue loss associated with the mortgage entitlement is expected to rise to more than seventy-five billion dollars by 2002, the plan actually *increases* the middle- and upper-class divorce entitlement by a whopping twenty-five per cent.

Apart from the question of fiscal priorities, think of the troubling signal this entitlement sends. The government is saying, on behalf of all of us, that not only will it legally grant and recognize your divorce but also, as a reward, it will subsidize it by helping you buy another home—that sacred symbol of family and commitment. What a mockery! Is it any wonder that after decades of this perverse incentive the divorce rate in America has skyrocketed? And can it be coincidence that countries like Canada, Germany, and Great Britain, which have far less divorce, also have smaller mortgage-interest subsidies, or none at all? In the face of this evidence—which may sound a little sketchy but is at least as rigorous as the behavioral logic posited by advocates of the family cap—a few liberal softies are sure to nonetheless complain that certain marriages really shouldn't continue, and that it's unfair to make things harder for people who are only trying to escape their pain. Principled conservatives will reject such debauched excuses: *that's just too bad,* they will say, the way it's just too bad that poor children will have to suffer for their parents' mistakes. But then no one ever said that standing guard over the sanctity of the American family would be easy.

What's the principled conservative answer? Obviously, to deny the mortgage-interest deduction to anyone who has been divorced. The moral message that this action would send is plain. The deficit reduction it would bring is a bonus. And the sea change it would mark in social policy is overdue; after all, since the Second World War we've spent close to a trillion dollars subsidizing a house-buying spree for non-poor Americans, and these people are still on the dole. Last—and, it must be said, least—ending the mortgage entitlement as we know it would tidy up the moral accounts of a movement that would never, never want to be accused of scapegoating. —Matthew Miller

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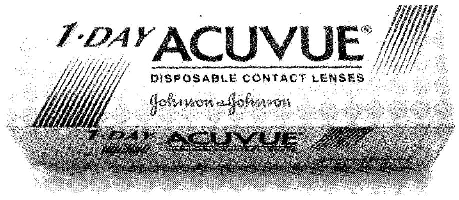

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IN THE MAIL

JERRY GARCIA REMEMBERED

Hal Espen's eulogy of Jerry Garcia and the Grateful Dead (Comment, August 21st / August 28th) reminded me of an incident that took place in the spring of 1971, and that epitomizes for me the craziness of a Dead concert, the band's anarchic spirit, and its support for its fans. The Dead were playing in the cavernous gymnasium at the University of Iowa, in Iowa City. I was in front of the stage, enjoying the music close up, when there was a disturbance in the crowd behind me and a longhaired Deadhead appeared. He was clad only in his underwear, had a crazed, distant look in his eye, and clutched a key. "I've got to give this to Bob," he kept saying, referring to the rhythm guitarist, Bob Weir. Upon reaching the stage, he clambered up onto it, walked the few feet over to Weir, and attempted to give him the key. Since Weir was busy playing his guitar at the time, he did not appreciate the offer, and the intruder was whisked offstage by security guards.

At the next song break, a well-groomed, clean-shaven young man who appeared to hold some position of authority on campus approached one of the microphones and started exhorting the audience to behave itself and have some respect for the performers. At this point, Garcia and Weir, ostensibly tuning up for the next song, started playing loud, raucous chords on their guitars, which effectively drowned the young man out. Frustrated and a bit confused, he spoke louder into the microphone, only to be matched by consistently louder dissonance from the band, until at last he gave up and walked offstage. The Dead had defended their own.

WILLIAM C. BURTON
Reston, Va.

Jerry Garcia may be a demigod to some, but to me his life represents a debacle. His desire to portray the drug culture as attractive to young people and thus destroy them as potentially responsible and creative members of society is a crime beyond description. The drug culture now permeating our society has robbed us of a potential we will never realize.

J. RYCHETNIK
Palm Springs, Calif.

TICKET TO NOWHERE?

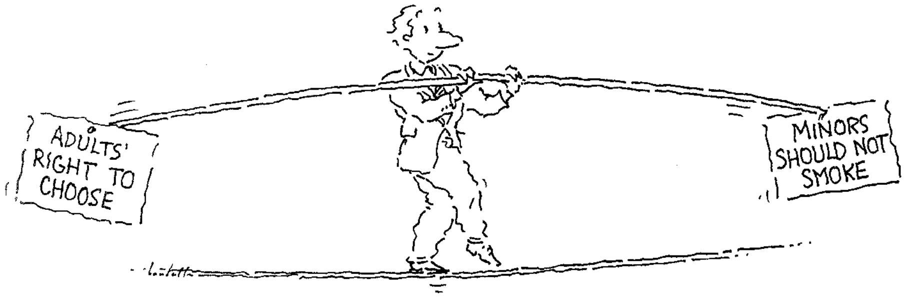
I disagree with Hendrik Hertzberg's Comment ("The Independent Route," September 4th) endorsing the view of Senator Bill Bradley that our political institutions are broken. Much as one may loathe the abrasive style of our House Speaker as he leads the Republican-controlled Congress, Newt Gingrich has given the country a vision that citizens, in this "three-headed" democracy, are free to embrace or reject. A Powell-Bradley Presidential ticket would certainly be popular, but it won't bring about better government. Better government can be brought about by citizens supporting and shaping the convictions of their democratic leaders. If politics is broken, it is we, the people, who are to blame.

PAUL SANBORN
South Londonderry, Vt.

A Powell-Bradley ticket may be just the breath of fresh air we need. But in describing such a ticket as "scary" Mr. Hertzberg may not have realized just how appropriate that adjective might become. An independent candidate of some kind is increasingly likely. Three-fifths of American voters would welcome such an option. But in an election with three or four candidates

Our position, word by word.

Balance



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it is quite possible that no Presidential candidate will receive a majority of the electoral-college votes, and if that should happen the decision would be made by the House. It has happened before, but not in this century. Would our country survive the controversy and confusion of such an outcome?

CARLA BOSCO
Cambridge, Mass.

LAST LAUGH

William Styron's reminiscence of trying to persuade Random House to publish "Lolita" only to be blocked by an outraged Hiram Haydn (The Talk of the Town, September 4th) recalls an incident when I was reviewing fiction for the *Library Journal.* In 1960, I wrote a derogatory review of Al Hine's "Lord Love a Duck," a truly tasteless and vulgar novel, published by Haydn under the Atheneum imprint. "In a recent article in *Esquire* magazine," my review began, "Mr. Hiram Haydn of Atheneum is quoted as saying, 'I like to make my own mistakes.' This is one of them." Shortly thereafter, I received a typed note from Haydn. "I am sure this wasn't your intent," he wrote, "but when I read the first two sentences of your review . . . I laughed for a full two minutes. What's more, that was yesterday and I have been laughing on and off ever since." In his own hand, he affixed an asterisk, and at the bottom of the page he scrawled the words "at myself."

JOHN C. PINE
El Dorado Hills, Calif.

BAD BIDS

James Traub's encomium to New York City's business-improvement districts ("Street Fight," September 4th) overlooks the most serious problem created by this form of government. All over New York, groups like the Grand Central Partnership, the Central Park Conservancy, and the Bryant Park Restoration Corporation have effectively taken over public spaces—making them safe and attractive by plowing money into security and aesthetics. But these BIDs, while making some areas more attractive, make others, by contrast, less so. The city government does not compensate areas that cannot afford to compete, so BIDs affirm the advantages of areas that are already affluent, while providing the government with an excuse to ignore areas that are not.

SHARON ZUKIN
New York City

MAHLER SCHOLAR

After languishing in obscurity for eighteen years, I am happy to see my work finally recognized by *The New Yorker*. I was, however, misquoted by Alex Ross, in his article "Mahlermania" (Books, September 4th). Mr. Ross writes that "a scofflaw painted a French horn and the legend 'Mahler Lives' across the pylon of a railway bridge in Washington, D.C." What some friends and I actually spray-painted on that trestle at the intersection of Canal Road and Arizona Avenue was "Mahler Grooves." Future Mahler scholars, take note.

ZACHARY H. SMITH
Jacksonville, Fla.

Letters should be as brief as possible, and sent with the writer's name, address, and daytime phone number to "In the Mail," The New Yorker, 20 West 43rd Street, New York, N.Y. 10036. They may be edited for length and clarity.

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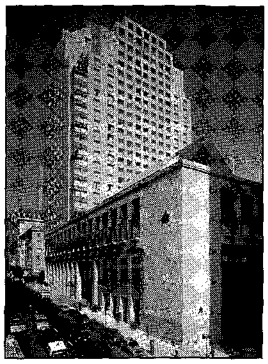

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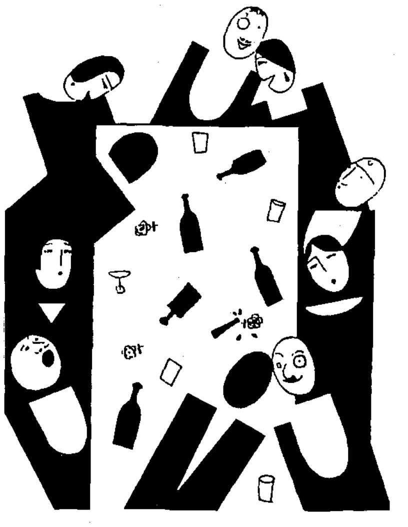

GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN

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THE THEATRE

Good Company

When Veanne Cox makes her entrance, as the very neurotic Amy, on opening night of the Roundabout's revival of "Company" this Thursday, her parents won't be sitting front and center. "The best I could do for them was the back of the house," she laments. Still, they've done better than a lot of other theatregoers: the show's performances are virtually sold out. "I've always thought of 'Company' as 'the cult musical,' " Cox says. "I guess it's a pretty large cult." (A proposed transfer to the Brooks Atkinson after the current run ends, on December 3, could help quiet the clamoring.)

The Virginia native may have her own cult soon. She got practice playing Amy a couple of years ago in a California production with Carol Burnett, whose what-the-hell acting style she seems to have imbibed (although she looks more like Annette Bening). Now she breezes through the Act I song "Getting Married Today"—a breakneck barrage of prenuptial jitters which is sometimes cited as proof that Sondheim hates singers. Cox insists that the song has gotten a bum rap: "It's not *that* hard," she says. "It creates its own pace, and you go along for the ride."

OPENINGS AND PREVIEWS

(Please call the phone number listed with the theatre for timetables and ticket information.)

Admissions—Austin Pendleton directs a new play by Tony Vellela, about the effects of hidden prejudice on a college campus. Opens Sept. 29 at 8 and runs through Oct. 17. (New Perspectives, 750 8th Ave., at 46th St. 730-2030.)

Company—The Roundabout Theatre Company opens its thirtieth-anniversary season with a revival of Stephen Sondheim and George Furth's 1970 musical about marriage. Directed by Scott Ellis and choreographed by Rob Marshall. Two previews on Sept. 27. Opens Sept. 28 at 8. (Broadway at 45th St. 869-8400.)

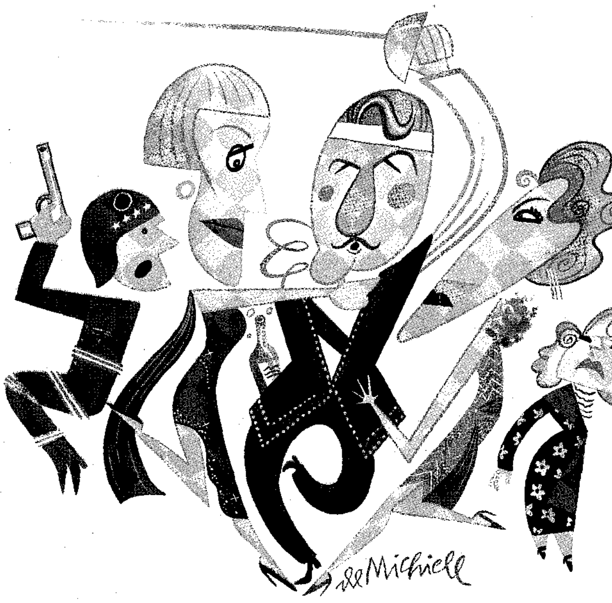
Dangerous Corner—David Mamet directs the Atlantic Theatre Company's production of J. B. Priestley's 1932 mystery. Previews begin Sept. 30. (336 W. 20th St. 239-6200.)

Endgame—A Classic Stage Company production of Samuel Beckett's 1957 play. With Kathleen Chalfant, John Seitz, Irma St. Paule, and Alan Manson. Directed by David Esbjornson. In previews. (136 E. 13th St. 677-4210.)

Full Gallop—Manhattan Theatre Club's season opener examines the later career of the fashion editor Diana Vreeland. Mary Louise Wilson, who stars, cowrote the script with Mark Hampton. Directed by Nicholas Martin. In previews. (Manhattan Theatre Club, at City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 581-1212.)

Garden District—Circle in the Square inaugurates its forty-fifth-anniversary season with two one-acts by Tennessee Williams ("Something Unspoken," starring Myra Carter and Pamela Payton-Wright and directed by Theodore Mann, and "Suddenly Last Summer," starring Elizabeth Ashley and directed by Harold Scott), presented under the title of the original 1958 double bill. In previews. (50th St. west of Broadway. 239-6200.)

Mathew in the School of Life—Composer John Moran and director Bob McGrath's collaboration, performed against a background of film and slide projections to a prerecorded assemblage of synthesized music, found sounds, and dialogue. Mr. Moran is one of three actors who portray the title character, a robot-angel from a science-fiction heaven. A Ridge Theatre production. In previews. (The Kitchen, 512 W. 19th St. 255-5793.)



Andy Taylor, Carol Burnett, Philip Bosco, Randy Graff, and Jane Connell, in "Moon Over Buffalo."

ROBERT DEMICHIELL

Moon Over Buffalo—Carol Burnett and Philip Bosco star in Ken Ludwig's new comedy as husband-and-wife actors playing Buffalo with a touring company. Tom Moore is the director. In previews through the Oct. 1 matinée. Opens that evening at 8. (Martin Beck, 302 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

Moonlight—Jason Robards, Blythe Danner, and Paul Hecht lead the cast in the Roundabout's production of Harold Pinter's latest play. Directed by Karel Reisz. Previews begin Sept. 27. (Laura Pels, Broadway at 45th St. 869-8400.)

Nixon's Nixon—Gerry Bamman is the title character and Steve Mellor is Henry Kissinger in Russell Lees' new play, set in the White House during a secret meeting on the night before the President's resignation. Previews begin Sept. 29. (MCC, 120 W. 28th St. 727-7765.)

Sin—Kelly Coffield plays an aerial traffic reporter in this comedy by Wendy MacLeod. Directed by David Petrarca. In previews. (Second Stage, Broadway at 76th St. 873-6103.)

Sylvia—In A. R. Gurney's comedy, a dog named Sylvia brings meaning to the life of a middle-aged currency trader while driving a canine-shaped wedge between him and his wife. Previews begin on Sept. 29 at a new theatre, with John Tillinger directing a largely new cast. (John Houseman, 450 W. 42nd St. 239-6200.)

Victor/Victoria—Julie Andrews has returned to Broadway to star in a theatrical version of the 1982 movie. With Tony Roberts, Michael Nouri, and Rachel York. Written and directed by Blake Edwards. Choreography by Rob Marshall; score by the late Henry Mancini. Previews begin Oct. 3. (Marquis, Broadway at 45th St. 307-4100.)

OPENED RECENTLY

After-Play—Anne Meara's comedy, about two couples who get together for an after-theatre dinner, stars Ms. Meara, Barbara Barrie, Larry Keith, and Merwin Goldsmith. (Reviewed in our issue of 2/13/95.) (Theatre Four, 424 W. 55th St. 239-6200.)

Blink of an Eye—A comic mystery by Jeremy Dobrish, which continues through Sept. 30. (Ohio Theatre, 66 Wooster St. 560-7387.)

Dark Is the Night—Aleksandar Popovic's absurdist drama, set in Belgrade in 1991, deals with a family's attempt to maintain a sense of normalcy as their world deteriorates amid antiwar demonstrations. Thursdays through Sundays, through Oct. 1. (La Mama, 74A E. 4th St. 475-7710.)

Death Defying Acts—Three subpar one-act comedies, by David Mamet, Elaine May, and Woody Allen, that have the words "Written to Order" stamped all over them. (3/20/95) (Variety Arts, Third Ave. at 14th St. 239-6200.)

A Doll's House—Nora Helmer learns, once again, that it takes more than fiscal soundness to make a marriage blissful. The Pearl Theatre Company's staging coasts along securely on traditional tracks, though it's jolted now and again by a chatty tone that seems unsuited to an Oslo drawing room of 1879. Robin Leslie Brown plays Ibsen's songbird turned feminist, Michael Butler her dull and doting husband. Grey Johnson directed. (80 St. Marks Pl. 598-9802.)

A Dream Play—The Independent Theatre Company opens its eighth season with August Strindberg's despairing meditation on the difficulties of life, movingly directed by Paul Todaro. The cast is strong; Rajesh Bose, in particular, is good at bringing out the script's dark humor. (House of Candles Theatre, 99 Stanton St. 353-3088. Closes Oct. 7.)

Ecstasy—Mike Leigh's play takes place in a dismal North London flat in the winter of 1979. The late-seventies costumes and set are depressingly perfect, and the actors bring the six working-class characters to life with great specificity and vitality. (Judith Anderson, 422 W. 42nd St. 279-4200. Closes Oct. 7.)

The Emperor Jones—Kate Valk, Paul Lazar, and Dave Shelley are in the cast of the Wooster Group's production of O'Neill's 1920 drama. (Performing Garage, 33 Wooster St. 966-3651. Closes Oct. 1.)

Floating Rhoda and the Glue Man—Dylan McDermott and Myriam Cyr have the lead roles in Eve Ensler's new comedy, about the sexual adventures of young couples. Directed by

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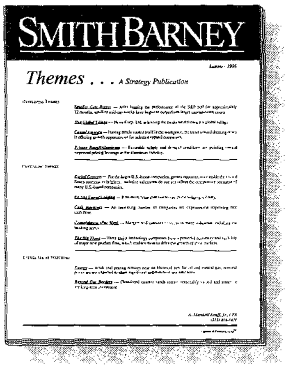
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Ariel Orr Jordan. (HERE, 145 Sixth Ave., near Spring St. 647-0202. Closes Sept. 30.)

The Food Chain—In Nicky Silver's new play, the paths of five New Yorkers cross, hilariously. The situations are familiar and sitcom-ish, but the writing is tangy and memorably funny, and the actors—especially Hope Davis, as a dithery poet, and Phyllis Newman, as a long-suffering Jewish matron whose idea of listening is to talk—give smart, wonderfully fresh performances. Robert Falls directed. (9/11/95) (Westside, 407 W. 43rd St. 307-4100.)

Having Our Say—Sadie and Bessie Delany, two sisters who have passed the hundred-year mark, presented their vivid life stories in a 1993 best-seller; the book has been adapted beautifully by Emily Mann, who also directed. Gloria Foster and Mary Alice are brilliant as the sisters, who were taught by their family to "reach high" despite the dogging of Jim Crow. (4/24/95) (Booth, 222 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

How to Succeed in Business Without Really Trying—In this revival of Frank Loesser's 1961 musical, Matthew Broderick has polish and timing, but it's Lillias White's gospel solo in "Brotherhood of Man" that lifts the audience into a zone of joy. (4/24/95) (Richard Rodgers, 226 W. 46th St. 307-4100.)

Indiscretions—This production of Jean Cocteau's "Les Parents Terribles," a dark comedy about the perversities of desire in family life, is marred by heavy-handedness and an unsatisfying central performance: Kathleen Turner, playing a hysterically possessive mother, is an unfocussed sprawl with a distractingly unplaceable accent. Roger Rees, Cynthia Nixon, and Jude Law also star, under the direction of Sean Mathias. (5/15/95) (Ethel Barrymore, 243 W. 47th St. 239-6200.)

John & Jen—A musical by Andrew Lippa and Tom Greenwald, which explores problems of love and family—it's often hackneyed and repetitive, though it's well staged by Gabriel Barre. (Lamb's, 130 W. 44th St. 997-1780.)

Math and Aftermath—Jim Grimsley's play is set in 1953 on the Marshall Islands' Bikini atoll, the day before one of the United States' infamous atomic-bomb tests, during the filming of a gay porn movie. (Camilla's, 44 Walker St. 925-9456. Closes Sept. 30.)

Mister Lincoln—A one-man show, written by Herbert Mitgang and starring William Walsh, that tells the complete story of the sixteenth president in excruciating detail. Though some of the anecdotes are entertaining and informative, Walsh's delivery doesn't do justice to Lincoln's famed oratorical skills. For Civil War buffs. (Irish Arts Center, 553 W. 51st St. 581-4125. Closes Oct. 1.)

Party—In David Dillon's comedy, seven gay men get together to play a strip version of truth or dare, with terrifically funny (if occasionally didactic) results. (Douglas Fairbanks, 432 W. 42nd St. 239-4321.)

Pets!—Helen Butleroff, together with seventeen writers, composers, and lyricists and five engaging actors, has created a witty revue, about people and their pets. The evening has its slow bits, but how can you lose with a show in which a lovelorn iguana sings a tango? (Theatre East, 211 E. 60th St. 307-4100.)

Reinventing Daddy—A dysfunctional-family comedy by Gary Bonasorte, presented by Rattlestick Productions. (Theatre Off Park, 224 Waverly Pl., at 11th St. 353-3665. Closes Oct. 15.)

Same Old Moon—In Geraldine Aron's sentimental yet hard-edged comedy, an Irish-born writer who is in the process of separating from her husband returns home after years abroad, triggering a flurry of memories that support the theory that an unhappy childhood is what makes a writer. Madeleine Potter is superb as the central character (she plays her from ages nine to forty). The strong performances of Terry Donnelly, as her mother, and Risteard Cooper (a dead ringer for Eugene O'Neill), as her tyrannical, ailing father, show off the breadth of the Irish Rep's talent. Charlotte Moore directed. (Irish Repertory Theatre, 132 W. 22nd St. 279-4200. Closes Oct. 15.)

Signature Theatre Company—Presenting a double bill of dramas by this season's playwright in residence, Adrienne Kennedy: "Funnyhouse of a Negro" and "A Movie Star Has to Star in Black and White." (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 260-2400.)

Standing By—If you arrive at the theatre in the mood for TV, this love story—about an ailing Wasp flutist and a Jewish television writer and aspiring playwright who meet on a plane, fall in love overnight, and discover pat cultural differences (she says mazel tov at the wrong times)—should satisfy you nicely. (It even has its own prerecorded theme song.) Presented by the York Theatre Company. (Theatre at St. Peter's Church, Lexington Ave. at 54th St. 935-5820. Closes Oct. 15.)

"Mathew in the School of Life," at the Kitchen.

Third New Immigrant Play Festival—"Odysseus' Homecoming," by Colombian playwright Ben-Hur Carmona, is the final offering in the annual showcase of new works. (26th Street Theatre, 309 E. 26th St. 683-9772. Closes Oct. 8.)

Too Jewish?—Avi Hoffman sets about reviving Yiddish in this mixture of songs and stories. (Westside, 407 W. 43rd St. 307-4100.)

Travels with My Aunt—Giles Havergal's witty, inventively staged adaptation of Graham Greene's novel. (Minetta Lane Theatre, 18 Minetta Lane. 420-8000. Closes Oct. 1.)

Waiting for Godot—A solidly played production of Samuel Beckett's modernist classic, directed by Eve Adamson. (Bouwerie Lane Theatre, 330 Bowery, at Bond St. 677-0060.)

What Ever—Heather Woodbury brings her eight-part solo serial, in which she plays ten major characters and more than ninety minor ones, back to P.S. 122. Directed by Dudley Saunders. Sept. 27-28 and Oct. 1 at 7:30, and Sept. 29-30 at 7:30 and 10:30. Continues through Oct. 28. (150 First Ave., at 9th St. 477-5288.)

Working Class—Richard Hoehler's play, recently seen at the Edinburgh Festival, takes a look at American laborers. (Mint, 311 W. 43rd St. 315-9434. Closes Oct. 8.)

LONG RUNS

BEAUTY AND THE BEAST: Palace, Broadway at 47th St. 307-4100. . . . **BLUE MAN GROUP / TUBES:** Astor Place Theatre, 434 Lafayette St. 254-4370. . . . **CATS:** Winter Garden, Broadway at 50th St. 239-6200. . . . **CRAZY FOR YOU:** Shubert, 225 W. 44th St. 239-6200. . . . **THE FANTASTICKS:** Sullivan Street Playhouse, 181 Sullivan St., at Bleecker St. 674-3838. . . . **GRANDMA SYLVIA'S FUNERAL:** SoHo Playhouse, 15 Vandam St. 691-1555. . . . **GREASE!:** Eugene O'Neill, 230 W. 49th St. 239-6200. . . . **THE HEIRESS:** Cort, 138 W. 48th St. 239-6200. . . . **LES MISÉRABLES:** Imperial, 249 W. 45th St. 239-6200. . . . **MISS SAIGON:** Broadway Theatre, Broadway at 53rd St. 239-6200. . . . **PERFECT CRIME:** Duffy, 1553 Broadway, at 46th St. 695-3401. . . . **THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA:** Majestic, 245 W. 44th St. 239-6200. . . . **ROB BECKER'S DEFENDING THE CAVEMAN:** Helen Hayes, 240 W. 44th St. 307-4100. . . . **SHOW BOAT:** Gershwin, 51st St. west of Broadway. 307-4100. . . . **SMOKEY JOE'S CAFÉ—THE SONGS OF LEIBER AND STOLLER:** Virginia, 245 W. 52nd St. 239-6200. . . . **STOMP:** Orpheum, 126 Second Ave., at St. Marks Pl. 477-2477. . . . **SUNSET BOULEVARD:** Minskoff, 45th St. west of Broadway. 307-4007. . . . **SWINGTIME CANTEEN:** Blue Angel, 321 W. 44th St. 239-6200. . . . **TONY N' TINA'S WEDDING:** St. John's Church, 81 Christopher St. 279-4200.

DANCE

Compagnie Maguy Marin—The French troupe performs "May B," an absurdist ode to Samuel Beckett in which the powdered dancers scamper about in white nightclothes. (Joyce Theatre, 175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 242-0800. Sept. 27-29 at 8 and Sept. 30 at 2 and 8.)

"Constanza"—An evening-length duet, in which the choreographer Margarita Guergué and the dancer Veronica de Soyza catalogue the unspoken accommodations of two people living together in the same room. (Dance Theatre Workshop, 219 W. 19th St. 924-0077. Sept. 28-30 at 8 and Oct. 1 at 3.)

"Global Exchange"—New Zealander Jeremy Nelson and Venezuelan Luis Lara inaugurate Danspace Project's series of international collaborations with a shared program of four dances. (St. Mark's In-the-Bouwerie, Second Ave. at 10th St. 674-8194. Sept. 28-Oct. 1 at 8:30.)

Ballet Sin—The début engagement of the nine-member company features five works by choreographer Carlos Fittante. (Merce Cunningham Studio, 55 Bethune St. 956-1255. Sept. 29-30 at 9 and Oct. 1 at 8.)

"Tango x 2"—Three pairs of dancers (led by Miguel Angel Zotto and Milena Plebs), a sextet of musicians, and the chanteuse Roxana Fontan perform thirty-two contemporary tangos. (Lehman Center, 250 Bedford Park Blvd. W., the Bronx. 1-718 960-8833. Oct. 1 at 7.)

"One Night Only"—The Peggy Spina Tap Company and the Joel Forrester quartet negotiate the rhythms of samba, bossa nova, and swing, in choreography by Spina, Meyuki Kato, Jennifer Wehr, and Buster Brown. (Spina Loft, 115 Prince St. 674-8885. Sept. 30 at 6 and 8:30.)

"MinEvent"—In a new, site-specific version of Merce Cunningham's half-hour work, performers from his company dance in Robert Rauschenberg's costumes. Pianist Peter Serkin and the Guarneri Quartet will also perform Brahms's Piano Quintet at the event, the opening-night gala for the Miller Theatre's new season. (Columbia University, Broadway at 116th St. 854-7799. Sept. 27 at 7:30.)

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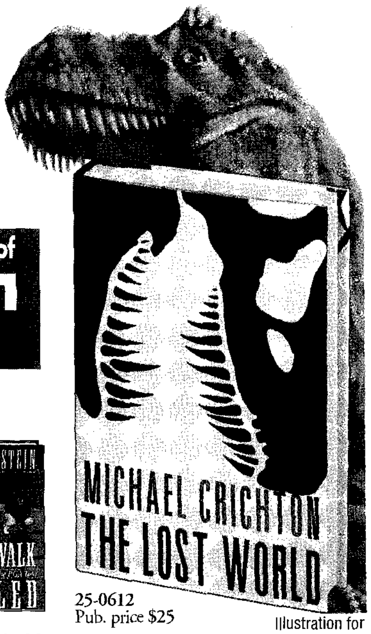
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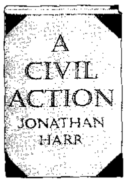
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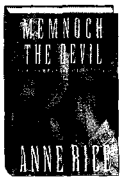
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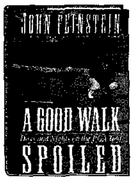
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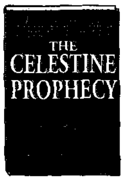
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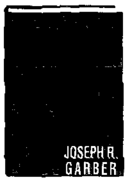
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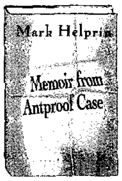
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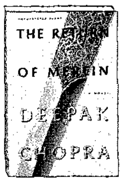
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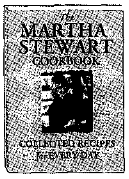
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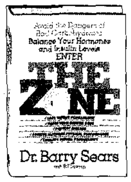
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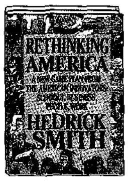
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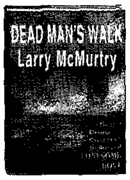
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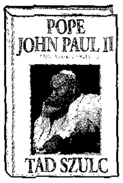
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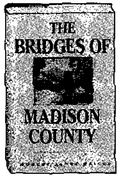
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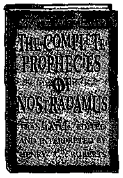
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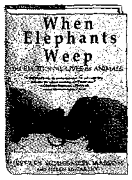
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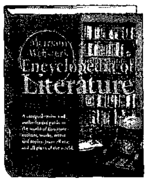
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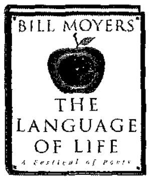
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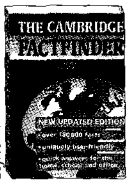
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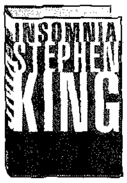
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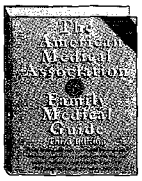
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NIGHT LIFE

Master Classes

SOME guitarists are bent on cramming together as many notes as possible, but Jim Hall plays the instrument with a jeweler's touch: a gorgeous chord here, a lyrical phrase there, a perfectly placed note ringing in luxurious space. There aren't many musicians who can compare, but Hall—a paragon of patience and modesty—is always willing to share the spotlight. His current recording, "Dialogues," features a sterling guest cast, including saxophonist Joe Lovano, flugelhornist Tom Harrell, accordionist Gil Goldstein, and guitarists Bill Frisell and Mike Stern—all of whom will appear with him this week, when the sixty-four-year-old legend comes to the Village Vanguard. Frisell (September 26), Harrell (September 28), and Lovano (September 30) share Hall's obsession with taste and exactitude, while Goldstein (September 27) and Stern (September 29), who have a looser approach, will almost certainly be on their best behavior, making these pairings the stuff that jazz dreams are made of. (Hall will play with his trio, sans guest, on October 1.)

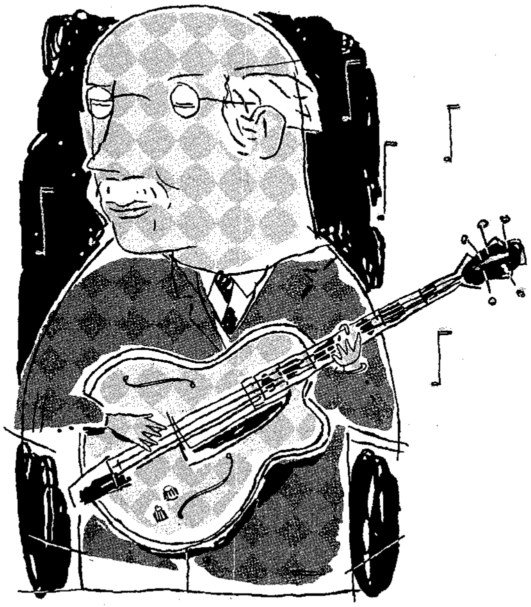
CONCERTS

DAVID BOWIE / NINE INCH NAILS—Bowie recently gave the keynote address at a college-rock conference at Lincoln Center, and the house was two-thirds full. The forty-eight-year-old rock god hasn't had a top-ten hit since "Let's Dance," in 1983, or a truly influential album since "Scary Monsters"—the last of his great collaborations with Brian Eno—in 1980. But a college-rock conference is where Bowie belongs: his music has given rise to a whole new crop of bands that make some of the finest pop around, even when it's transparently derivative. Suede, Blur, and Spacehog (see Wetlands) are just a few of the young dudes weaned on "Diamond Dogs" and "The Rise and Fall of Ziggy Stardust and the Spiders from Mars." Bowie's new record, "Outside"—his twenty-fourth—marks the return of Eno, but the sonic guru's work with everyone from U2 to Pavarotti seems to have diluted his creativity. Apart from a few spooky new sounds, it's another sporadically inspired album that won't sell. Bowie's last tour was something of a Vegas act, but the current show looks promising, thanks to the galvanizing presence of Nine Inch Nails. / For the past five years, Trent Reznor, the Nails' twenty-nine-year-old auteur—he is the band's songwriter, singer, and studio genius—has mounted a maniacal aural assault on the minds of American youth. "Your parents should hate it," he told the Los Angeles *Times*. "If you think I worship Satan . . . great." But Nine Inch Nails offers more than mere din and depravity; ranting aside, Reznor is an audacious artist whose machine-music assemblages can be as hypnotic as they are terrifying. (Meadowlands Arena. 1-201 935-3900. Sept. 27-28 at 8.)

GUY DAVIS—Free blues by the water. (World Financial Center, Battery Park City. Sept. 27 at 7.)

DOO-WOP-O-RAMA—Featuring, in alphabetical order, the Channels, the Chimes, the Classics, the Coasters, the Drifters, the Impalas, the Mystics, the Passions, the Shangri-Las, and more. (Paramount, Madison Square Garden. 465-6000. Sept. 29 at 8.)

GIL SCOTT-HERON—In the seventies, while many of his R. & B. peers were blissfully succumbing to disco fever, this singer-pianist (who's also a poet and a novelist) was fusing jazz and funk textures with sobering political rap—which makes "Spirits," his first album in twelve years, a potent, timely return. (Schomburg Center, 515 Lenox Ave., at 135th St. 491-2206. Sept. 29-30 at 7.)



Jim Hall, at the Village Vanguard.

WARD SCHUMAKER

DIXIE HUMMINGBIRDS—The mighty gospel group. (Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. 864-5400. Oct. 1 at 7.)

CYRUS CHESTNUT—He has the mischievous presence of an elf, but make no mistake: this pianist is a monster. During his apprentice days with Betty Carter, it was obvious that his eminently smart and funky playing portended something special; now he's delivering on that promise. (Merkin Concert Hall, 129 W. 67th St. 362-8719. Oct. 2 at 8.)

FRANK FOSTER BENEFIT—As one of the "two Franks" (along with Frank Wess) of the Count Basie band, Foster established himself as a challenging improviser and resourceful composer, which stood him in good stead when he came to lead the band in the eighties. Featuring Lionel Hampton, Max Roach, Al Grey, Jon Faddis, and other illustrious jazz names. (Davis Hall, City College, Convent Ave. at 134th St. 650-7100. Oct. 2 at 8.)

CLUBS

(A highly arbitrary listing, in which boldface type indicates some of the more notable performers in town. Musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives; it is advisable to call ahead to confirm engagements.)

BOTTOM LINE, 15 W. 4th St., at Mercer St. (228-6300)—Decent sight lines, great greasy food, prodigiously talented waitresses, and a consistent roster of high-quality acts. Sept. 27: **THE FABULOUS THUNDERBIRDS.** Sept. 28: **BRYNDLE.** Give yourself a laid-back pat on the back if you already knew that this reunited early-seventies Southern California band features Karla Bonoff, Kenny Edwards, Andrew Gold, and Wendy Waldman, all of whom went on to write and/or play with Linda Ronstadt during her hit-making heyday. The three-woman operation called **BETTY** settles in on Sept. 30. Betty's act, a sort of cabaret gone haywire, contains elements of funk, performance art, satire, and standup comedy, and it all moves along at an amphetamine pace.

BROWNIES, 169 Avenue A, at 10th St. (420-8392)—Sept. 29: Up-and-coming rockers **44**. Sept. 30: **RUN ON.** Their recent début, "On/Off," sounds like it was written and recorded in an afternoon, but it's altogether too brainy to qualify as your average slacker soundtrack. Live, the band has been known to make a mighty impressive noise. Oct. 3: **JIM LAUDERDALE** has a little bit of Roger Miller-style mischief in his soul, but his carefully crafted, slightly surreal confections are far from novelty numbers. His last album, "Pretty Close to the Truth," continued the quirky journey he started in 1991 with "Planet of Love."

CHICAGO B.L.U.E.S., 73 Eighth Ave., at 13th St. (924-9755)—Dedicated to the music of the Windy City. Sept. 27-28: **EDDIE BURKE AND DELTA BLUE.** Sept. 29-30: The **HOLMES BROTHERS.** There's no meteoric rags-to-riches story here. After more than twenty-five years in the business, this impossibly great band finally made its first album in 1989. The Holmes Brothers have it all: blues, soul, gospel, R. & B., and country, along with a poise that lends the mix an authority that younger, looser groups can't touch.

THE COOLER, 416 W. 14th St. (229-0785)—A lavender and stainless-steel dungeon deep in the heart of the meat district. Sept. 28: **MOLOTOV COCKTAIL LOUNGE,** featuring **MARC RIBOT.** Tuesday nights are given over to experimental d.j. spinoffs.

DUPLEX, 61 Christopher St., at Seventh Ave. (255-5438)—Everyone is a star here—the pianist, the bartender, the waiters, and the audience. The fabulous **DRESSING ROOM DIVAS** are in the house every Friday night.

IRVING PLAZA, 17 Irving Pl., at 15th St. (777-6800)—This sprawling two-floor establishment has been all things to all people: meeting hall, rock club, jazz club, Off Broadway theatre. Sept. 27-28: **ANI DIFRANCO.** This twenty-four-year-old Buffalo native has her own record label, called Righteous Babe, and it's a fitting title for a whip-smart acoustic warrior who strums with the ferocity of Fugazi and the grace of Joni Mitchell. She's put out seven records since she was eighteen, accruing a massive grassroots following along the way. The songs on "Not a Pretty Girl," her current album, are packed with an edgy, world-weary beauty; they're unsettling *and* soothing. Sept. 29-30: **FROM GOOD HOMES.** . . . ¶ The Swing Dance Society gathers here every Sunday, with sets from eight until midnight. For information on the society, call 696-9737.

LIMELIGHT, Sixth Ave. at 20th St. (807-7850)—A church turned eighties hot spot, this unholy venue currently plays host to a variety of techno and alternative acts. Oct. 1: Brutal Truth. Wednesday night is Disco 2000.

MATCH, 160 Mercer St. (343-0020)—This hip SoHo *boîte* is the place to be every Sunday night, thanks to the **SHORTY JACKSON LEGACY BLUES BAND.** Dining.

MERCURY LOUNGE, 217 E. Houston St. (260-4700)—Past the long bar, you'll find an exposed-brick room and a stage packed with some very hip rock acts. Oct. 3: The excellent acoustic duo **BILLY PILGRIM.** With Mary Karlzen.

MONKEY BAR, 60 E. 54th St. (838-2600)—Beyond the monkey murals, there's a bright see-and-be-seen dining arena that's perfect for committing high-profile indiscretions in a strapless gown. But the place to be is the dark and crowded bar up front, by the grand piano, where the bar stools look like stuffed olives. You perch on the pimiento. Dining.

S.O.B.'S, 204 Varick St., at W. Houston St. (243-4940)—A great grass hut with a fruit-and-bamboo motif, dedicated to calypso, reggae, and the bossa nova. Dining.

TRAMPS, 51 W. 21st St. (727-7788)—Early-nineties retro officially arrives on Sept. 29, when the **CHARLATANS U.K.** roll in. Harking back to the days when titans like Jesus Jones, the Soup Dragons, and Ned's Atomic Dustbin roamed the veldts of MTV's now-extinct "120 Minutes," the Charlatans, once presumed dead, now have a convincing new single, "Just When You're Thinkin' Things Over." But the headlines these days belong to the opening act, **MENSWEAR**—five English lads who dress like the Yardbirds and have a vague good-morning-little-schoolgirl lasciviousness about them. With Nancy Boy.

Wetlands, 161 Hudson St. (966-4225)—**SPACEHOG** splashes down on Sept. 28. If the Spiders from Mars (see David Bowie, in Concerts) had been a real band, they probably would have cut "Resident Alien," the soon-to-be-released début by this glam outfit from Leeds (now based in New York). Powered by the zircon-throated Royston Langdon and his guitar-playing brother, Anthony, the Hogs have a classic blokes-from-down-the-road charisma and a handful of anthems that would make Spiñal Tap proud.

JAZZ AND STANDARDS

Algonquin Hotel, 59 W. 44th St. (840-6800)—Tangy-voiced singer **WESLIA WHITFIELD** (in through mid-October) interprets the American popular canon with an understated, intelligent spin. Her early set features songs by Harry Warren and Victor Young, and in her late one she'll do selections from her aptly titled new CD, "Nice Work." Dining.

Birdland, 2745 Broadway, at 105th St. (749-2228)—An airy two-tiered space with pastel walls and potted greenery. Sept. 28: Jimmy Madison and friends. Dining.

Blue Note, 131 W. 3rd St., near Sixth Ave. (475-8592)—Through Oct. 1: the **MAX ROACH DOUBLE QUARTET.** Roach's outfit, with more than a decade of work behind it, is an institution by now. Meshing his own lean, pianoless band with a string quartet (which features his daughter, Maxine, on violin) affords Roach the latitude to indulge in textures both lush and abrasive. His brilliant drumming directs the ensemble, with a master conductor's baton stroke behind each emphatic beat. **JOE WILLIAMS** and **THE COUNT BASIE ORCHESTRA** take over on Oct. 3. Dining.

Carlyle Hotel, Madison Ave. at 76th St. (744-1600)—**BARBARA COOK** is in command of Café Carlyle through mid-October, backed up by her longtime pianist and arranger Wally Harper. Her voice remains almost defiantly that of the nineteen-fifties Broadway ingénue, and her material, particularly her homage to Mabel Mercer, is as supple as a fresh corsage. . . . ¶ Across the hall, in Bemelmans Bar, the suave and sybaritic **PETER MINTUN** is in attendance.

Fez, 380 Lafayette St. (533-7000)—A comfortable neo-Moroccan bar hidden inside the Time Café. The downstairs room, where bands perform, is a fine spot to take in a show. Sept. 30: **HAMIET BLUIETT'S BARBECUE BAND** and **RALPH PETERSON'S FO'TET.** Defying the conventional range of the baritone saxophone, Bluiett, a sometime member of the World Saxophone Quartet, can coax unnatural but beautiful sounds from his cumbersome instrument. Whether croaking like a bullfrog or screaming like a siren, he grounds his explorations in the bedrock of blues and gospel. Peterson's Fo'tet is driven by the leader's aggressive, in-your-face drumming. The **MINGUS BIG BAND** still packs them in every Thursday. Dining.

Fifty Seven Fifty Seven, 57 E. 57th St. (758-5757)—A cool, sumptuous piano-and-bass room in the Four Seasons Hotel, with twenty-two-foot-high ceilings, a long backlit bar stocked with single-malt Scotch, and fine jazz seven nights a week. Wednesdays through Saturdays, Donald Johnston is the featured pianist. Dining.

Iridium, 44 W. 63rd St. (582-2121)—Across the street from Lincoln Center, this restaurant and club features a handsome bar upstairs and a surreal performance space downstairs. Through Oct. 1: **DAVID (FATHEAD) NEWMAN,** a tenor saxophonist who has been waving the banner for gritty, soul-flavored jazz since he was the pride of Ray Charles's classic band in the fifties. He came up the hard way, and every second of pain can be heard in his rough tone and fervent approach. Drummer **LEON PARKER** settles in on Oct. 3. From his pared-down kit to his anything-goes take on jazz, Parker is an original—all rhythm and pure pleasure.

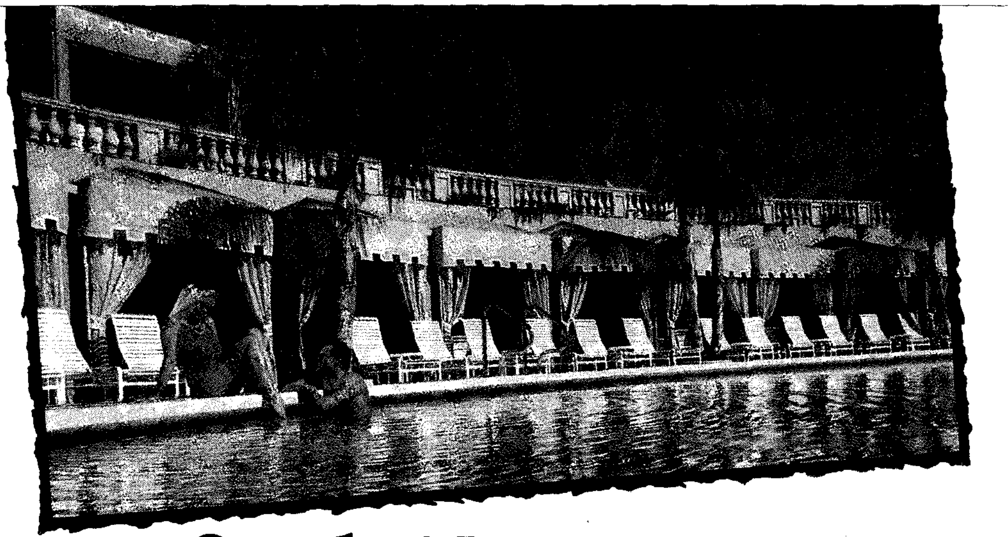
Knitting Factory, 74 Leonard St., between Broadway and Church St. (219-3055)—Sept. 28-30: **JOHN LURIE AND THE LOUNGE LIZARDS.** You've got to hand it to Lurie. For almost twenty years now he's been daring listeners to decide: poseur or visionary? Either way, it's hard not to like the Lizards' wacky G-man shtick.

Michael's Pub, 211 E. 55th St. (758-2272)—**MEL TORMÉ** is in through mid-October. His voice—small, precise, and immediately identifiable—has stayed about the same, but the buzzing, in-your-ear style he started out with thirty years ago has long since given way to an affable, swinging, hornlike attack much admired by musicians and other singers. On Mondays, Woody Allen continues his night job as clarinet player in the **NEW ORLEANS FUNERAL AND RAGTIME ORCHESTRA,** a Dixieland-jazz ensemble. Closed Sundays.

Rainbow & Stars, 30 Rockefeller Plaza (632-5000)—A plush, old-fashioned night club, sixty-five floors above it all, complete with Art Deco fixtures, intimate glitter, and a panoramic view as dizzying as the tab. With her svelte silhouette, haute couture, and piquant coif, **KAREN AKERS** (through mid-October) is every inch—some seventy-two—the chanteuse. (Moviegoers may remember her as the Copacabana songbird in "The Purple Rose of Cairo.") . . . ¶ Across the hall, in the Rainbow Room, there's a revolving dance floor, plus swinging big-band music courtesy of the Rainbow Room Orchestra, featuring vocalists Sean Mahony and Claudette Sierra. Closed Mondays.

Smalls, 183 W. 10th St. (929-7565)—A top contender in New York's ever-changing jazz topography, this aptly named club features up-and-coming players jamming late into the night.

Sweet Basil, 88 Seventh Ave. S., at Bleecker St. (242-1785)—Through Oct. 1: the **CHICO AND VON VREEMAN** quintet. When this Chicago



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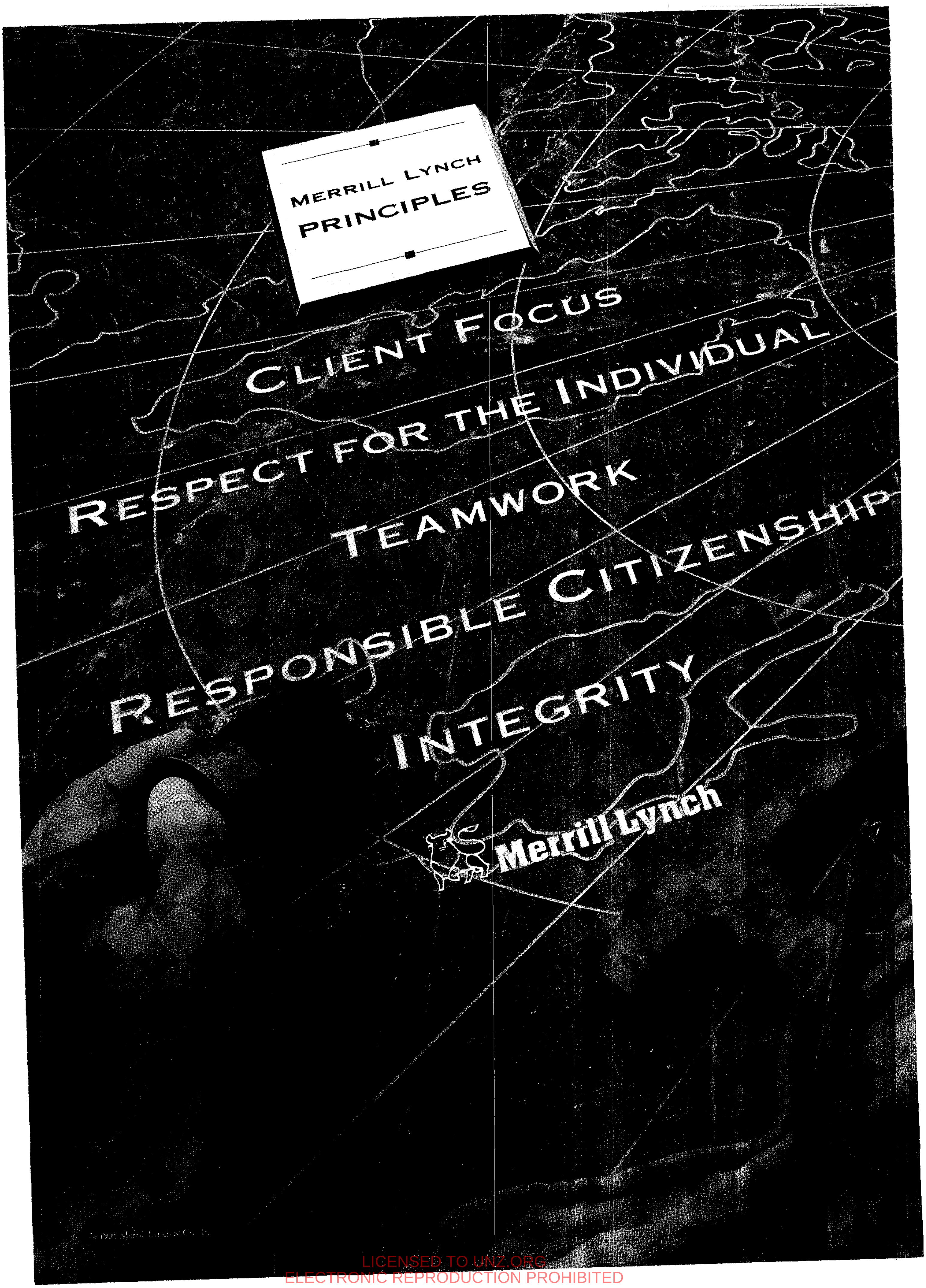
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tenor sax legend and his tenor-playing offspring get together, it's not uncommon for Dad to come off as an avant eccentric and his son as a well-mannered conservative. Age and temperament notwithstanding, a more propitious match of creativity and swing can't be found. **MAL WALDRON** is in the house starting Oct. 3. This pianist has spent the past forty years whittling notes away to the bare essentials, paring down his resources without paring down his vocabulary. During his edge-of-your-seat solos, he'll back himself into a corner, then gracefully escape—a tightrope walk that brings the questing spirit of early-sixties jazz alive again. Dining.

TAVERN ON THE GREEN, Central Park W. at 67th St. (873-3200)—This legendary tourist haven makes serious jazz fans welcome in the Chestnut Room, which resembles a hunting lodge and is every bit as over-the-top as the rest of the establishment. Through Oct. 1: Houston Person and Etta Jones. Dining.

David Bowie, at the Meadowlands Arena.

TERRY McELROY

VILLAGE VANGUARD, 178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (255-4037)—The world's most famous jazz club is also the last place in town that still looks, smells, and feels like a classic jazz club—subterranean, smoky, and thick with the spirits of past masters. Through Oct. 1: the **JIM HALL** trio, with special guests. The **VANGUARD JAZZ ORCHESTRA** holds sway on Mondays.

VISIONES, 125 Macdougal St., at W. 3rd St. (673-5576)—A tiny, low-key supper club where the jazz, like the Spanish-American cuisine, can take on a spicy, multicultural flavor. Sept. 27-30: The **OLIVER LAKE** quintet. With his tart-apple tone, Lake has fashioned the avant-garde impulse into a language all his own. A mainstay of the World Saxophone Quartet, he asserts his allegiance to the work of Eric Dolphy and Ornette Coleman in his own projects. Oct. 1: The **GUST TSILIS** sextet. A bold vibist and marimba player, Tsilis now takes on the piano, transferring his harmonic daring and rhythmic dash to the new instrument.

ZINC BAR, 90 W. Houston St. (477-8337)—Wednesdays in September belong to the **PHILIP HARPER** trio. Before it was commonplace for hot-shot young trumpeters to arrive with every other Greyhound bus, Harper was out there blowing. Since the breakup of the popular Harper Brothers band, he's been going it alone, with considerable sagacity and poise. On Tuesdays, former Jazz Messenger **DALE BARLOW** takes the reins. Sundays feature Brazilian music.

ART

MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

METROPOLITAN MUSEUM, Fifth Ave. at 82nd St.—"Goya in the Metropolitan Museum of Art," which comprises the Met's entire collection of works by the Spanish master—including seventeen paintings and more than three hundred and fifty etchings, lithographs, and drawings—addresses the reattribution of certain works over time. . . . ¶ The museum's collection of large paintings and frescoes by Giovanni Battista Tiepolo has been reinstalled, at the top of the main staircase, above the Great Hall. . . . ¶ The hundred works in "The Renaissance in France: Drawings from the École des Beaux-Arts, Paris" form a survey of superb draftsmanship. Through Nov. 12. . . .¶ Trenchcoats, epaulets, tartans, aviator glasses, khaki, and many other elements of civilian dress were recruited from the militaries of the world. "Swords Into Ploughshares," in the Costume Institute, offers a hundred outfits and a host of visual links between the wardrobes of the warrior and leisure classes. Through Nov. 26. . . . ¶ "Pages of Perfection: Islamic Paintings and Calligraphy from the Russian Academy of Sciences, St. Petersburg." . . . **NOTE:** The museum's roof garden is open, when weather permits, until Oct. 29. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:15, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 8:45.)

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART, 11 W. 53rd St.—It's blockbuster time again. "Piet Mondrian: 1872-1944," which comes to New York from the Hague, via Washington, D.C., is a medium-sized blowout, with a hundred and sixty paintings and drawings, close to half of them from the thirties and forties. The MOMA installation will have a few exclusive elements: "Broadway Boogie Woogie" and the unfinished "Victory Boogie Woogie," and a re-creation of the artist's last studio, at 15 E. 59th St. Starts Oct. 1. . . . ¶ "Alfred Stieglitz at Lake George," ninety-three photographs taken at the artist's upstate retreat, most of them from the twenties and thirties. . . . ¶ "Light Construction" examines, through models, large photographs, and drawings, the concepts of transparency and translucency in contemporary architecture. . . . ¶ Leon Levinstein's street photographs of people in New York neighborhoods from the fifties through the seventies. Through Oct. 12. . . . ¶ "Impressions of Nature" brings together a wide variety of modern landscape prints and paintings. (Open Saturdays through Tuesdays, 11 to 6; Thursdays and Fridays, noon to 8:30.)

GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM, Fifth Ave. at 89th St.—Selections from the permanent collection are on view. (Open Sundays through Wednesdays, 10 to 6; Fridays and Saturdays, 10 to 8.)

GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM SOHO, 575 Broadway—A survey of the conceptual photography of Dieter Appelt, supplemented by sculptural objects made by the artist for inclusion in these images. Through Nov. 5. . . . ¶ Fluorescent light sculptures from 1963 to 1987 by Dan Flavin. (Open Wednesdays through Sundays, 11 to 6, and Saturday evenings until 8.)

WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART, Madison Ave. at 75th St.—A terrific and illuminating double bill: "Edward Hopper and the American Imagination" (through Oct. 15) and "Florine Stettheimer: Manhattan Fantastica" (through Nov. 5). Hopper's work, with its solitary figures moving like somnambulists through otherwise vacant streets and interiors, embodies a very American vision of urban loneliness transformed by inexplicable moments of transcendence. Stettheimer, by contrast, epitomized, in both her art and her life, the fertile marriage of café society and the avant-garde. Her effervescent paintings record the milieu she cultivated in moods of brittle irony and poetic reverie. . . . ¶ "Views from Abroad: European Perspectives on American Art." Through Oct. 1. . . . ¶ Works on paper by Jackson Pollock. Through Oct. 23. (Open Wednesdays, and Fridays through Sundays, 11 to 6; Thursdays, 1 to 8.)

AMERICAN MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY, Central Park W. at 79th St.—A hundred and forty botanical watercolors, illustrations, engravings, and lithographs are on view; a third of them are of orchids. Among the artists represented are Pierre-Joseph Redouté, Margaret Mee, Marilena Pistoia, and Georg Dionys Ehret. . . . ¶ The skeletons of some one hundred saurischian and ornithischian dinosaurs have been cleaned and repositioned, and they're waiting for you. (Open daily, 10 to 5:45, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 8:45.)

DIA CENTER FOR THE ARTS, 548 W. 22nd St.—"European Couples, and Others: Works by Dan Flavin." Fluorescent light sculptures from the late sixties and early seventies. (Another show of Flavin's work is at the Guggenheim Museum SoHo.). . . ¶ "Atlas," Gerhard Richter's gargantuan, superbly enigmatic collection of (mainly) photographs. (Open Thursdays through Sundays, noon to 6.)

JEWISH MUSEUM, Fifth Ave. at 92nd St.—"Russian Jewish Artists in a Century of Change, 1890-1990," a large exhibition of paintings, sculptures, photographs, and graphic works by fifty artists, including Eric Bulatov, Léon Bakst, Marc Chagall, Ilya Kabokov, El Lissitzky, and Komar & Melamid. (Open Sundays through Thursdays, 11 to 5:45, and Tuesday evenings until 8.)

GALLERIES—UPTOWN

(Unless otherwise noted, galleries are open Tuesdays through Saturdays, from around 10 or 11 to between 5 and 6.)

JEAN DUBUFFET (1901-85)—Boldly colorful paintings from the early eighties which recall earlier works in the artist's *art brut* œuvre. Through Sept. 30. (Emmerich, 41 E. 57th St.)

WILLIAM H. JOHNSON (1901-70) / **BEAUFORD DELANEY** (1901-79)—Expressionistic oils and watercolors from the thirties and primitive-style silk screens from the early forties. / Impastoed, uninhibitedly colored abstract paintings from the sixties. Both shows through Nov. 11. (Rosenfeld, 24 W. 57th St.)

SOL LEWITT—Large multicolored gouaches on paper, consisting of many layers of wavy lines. Through Oct. 21. (Gagosian, 980 Madison Ave., at 76th St.)

MARISOL—The artist's first solo show in six years consists of her familiar portrait sculptures, made of wood beams and plywood. Through Oct. 21. (Marlborough, 40 W. 57th St. Open Mondays.)

JACKSON POLLOCK (1912-56)—An exhibition of recently discovered paintings and works on paper covering all phases of the artist's career, from the Bentonesque, frankly corny

"Family Scene" (circa 1934-36) to Surrealist-influenced work of the early forties to mature work—in particular, "Vertical" (1949), which looks like a small, narrow rectangle cut out of one of the artist's larger, grander canvases. Through Oct. 28. (McCoy, 41 E. 57th St. Open Mondays.)

PAT STEIR—"North Sea Passage." A departure from the recent "Waterfalls" series: mostly large-scale new paintings in which turbid whorls of paint reminiscent of both Turner and Pollock conjure images of stygian abysses. Steir seems to have her mind on the sublime, with lousy weather representing awe and terror. Through Oct. 14. (Robert Miller, 41 E. 57th St.)

ANDY WARHOL (1930-87)—Two shows. Uptown, an exhibition that covers a fair amount of ground with respect to Warhol's interests, both professional and private: drawings and prints from the fifties, when the young artist was one of New York's top illustrators. The lion's share of the pictures are brightly hued images of women's shoes, but there are also cats, dollar bills, comely young men, a recipe for Omelette Greta Garbo (an illustration accompanied by instructions), and a copy of "The Amy Vanderbilt Complete Cookbook" with Warhol's drawings. Through Oct. 14. (Sheehan, 41 E. 57th St. Open Mondays.) . . . ¶ Downtown, there's "Working Process: Unpublished Prints, Part 1," a show that, aside from "Ambulance Disaster" (1963) and a few other early pieces, consists primarily of curiosities from the eighties, some of them quite droll—for example, "Untitled (Fish)" (1983), a print based on Warhol's design for a fish-patterned wallpaper, against which he intended to display his paintings of children's toys. Through Oct. 14. (Feldman, 31 Mercer St.)

"FROM LEFT TO RIGHT: SOCIAL REALISM IN GERMANY AND RUSSIA, CIRCA 1919-33"—The links between German art of the Weimar era and Soviet revolutionary images are explored through the works of John Heartfield, George Grosz, Dmitri Moor, Otto Dix, Käthe Kollwitz, Viktor Deni, and many others. Through Nov. 4. (Galerie St. Etienne, 24 W. 57th St.)

"COLOR + STRUCTURE"—Paintings and sculptures by Robert Mangold, Nicola De Maria, Sean Scully, John Swanger, Frederic Matys Thursz, Mitja Tusek, and Richard Tuttle. Through Nov. 4. (Galerie Lelong, 20 W. 57th St.)

"1937—AMERICAN ABSTRACT ART"—Paintings and painted constructions by the "second wave" of American modernists, several of whom founded the American Abstract Artists group in that year. Included are works by Giorgio Cavallon, Burgoyne Diller, Charles Shaw, John Ferren, and Charles Biederman. Through Oct. 28. (Snyder, 20 W. 57th St.)

SHORT LIST—**JOSEPH BARTSCHERER**, Marian Goodman, 24 W. 57th St. Open Mondays; through Sept. 30. . . . **JOHN BUTTON** and **NANCY HAGIN**, Fischbach, 24 W. 57th St. Through Oct. 7. . . . **JAMES LEE BYARS**, Werner, 21 E. 67th St. Open Mondays; through Oct. 21. . . . **GEORGE CONDO** and **JULIO GONZALEZ**, Pace Wildenstein, 32 E. 57th St. Through Oct. 21. . . . **WILLEM DE KOONING**, C & M Arts, 45 E. 78th St. Through Nov. 18. . . . **JOSEPH DI GIORGIO**, O'Hara, 41 E. 57th St. Through Oct. 21. . . . **CAROLYN PLOCHMANN**, Kennedy, 730 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. Through Oct. 7. . . . **LADIS W. SABO**, York, 21 E. 65th St. Open Mondays, closed Saturdays; through Oct. 14.

GALLERIES—DOWNTOWN

UDI ALONI / SIGAL PRIMOR—The Israeli artist has undertaken nothing less than a graphic exploration of the sex life of Jehovah, derived from a reading of mystical Hebrew texts that might be described, mildly, as revisionist. Using a computer, he has shuffled around nude images of himself and his wife, putting penises where vaginas might be expected, anuses where most of us have nipples. Entertaining texts interweave a study of sacred Jewish texts and incidents from the life of a gay poet who contracts AIDS. The results are profoundly yucky—and perhaps even profound. Primor is Aloni's wife; her amusing cartoonlike drawings, based on a pedagogical text given to French schoolgirls in the nineteen-thirties, share the space. Both shows through Sept. 30. (Klagsbrun, 51 Greene St.)

CARROLL DUNHAM / LARI PITTMAN—New stuff from two of the most entertaining bad-boy painters working today. Dunham's big, organic forms have room to roam in a nine-by-fifteen-foot canvas the artist has been working on for years. Pittman's hypersexual, hypergraphic paintings now sport additional imagery: planes, helicopters, and other things militaristic. Both shows through Oct. 14. (Gorney, 100 Greene St.)

JACK FEATHERLY—The brashest new child of Pop, in his first New York solo exhibit, takes an unsparing, even hellish view of the way we live now, updating the vernacular of American bad taste from the fifties and sixties: Chiquita Banana meets Bret Easton Ellis. Mardi Gras beads, white picket fences, and pseudo-Scandinavian forests swirl in nauseating, if flawlessly painted, fantasias, with the artist's name incorporated in the designs in massive letters—dripping, in one case, with minatory smiley faces. Through Oct. 7. (Freire, 580 Broadway.)

WILLIAM L. HAWKINS (1895-1990)—Paintings and mixed-medium constructions by a self-taught artist. Through Oct. 14. (Ricco/Maresca, 152 Wooster St.)

RONALD JONES—Three bonsai sculptures, representing heaven, hell, and limbo, accompanied by a soundtrack, computer-generated photographs, landscape plans, a painting, found objects, and more. Through Oct. 14. (Metro Pictures, 150 Greene St.)

WOLFGANG LAIB—An installation of large ships made of beeswax, hoisted up on old wood beams. Through Oct. 21. (Sperone Westwater, 142 Greene St.)

KERRY JAMES MARSHALL—A series of large, vibrantly painted canvases, executed in a knowing faux-naïve style by the Chicago artist, which present a highly ironic vision of the inner-city housing project as Eden. The bold, graphic compositions recall Rosenquist at his best, but with seething passion in place of Pop cool. Through Oct. 7. (Shainman, 560 Broadway.)

ALISON SAAR—Among the sculptural icons in this show are "Terra Rosa," a clay figure representing a maternal spirit of the earth, and "Ho'," a figure assembled from old tin, nails, and a rusted garden-variety hoe. Through Nov. 4. (Kind, 136 Greene St.)

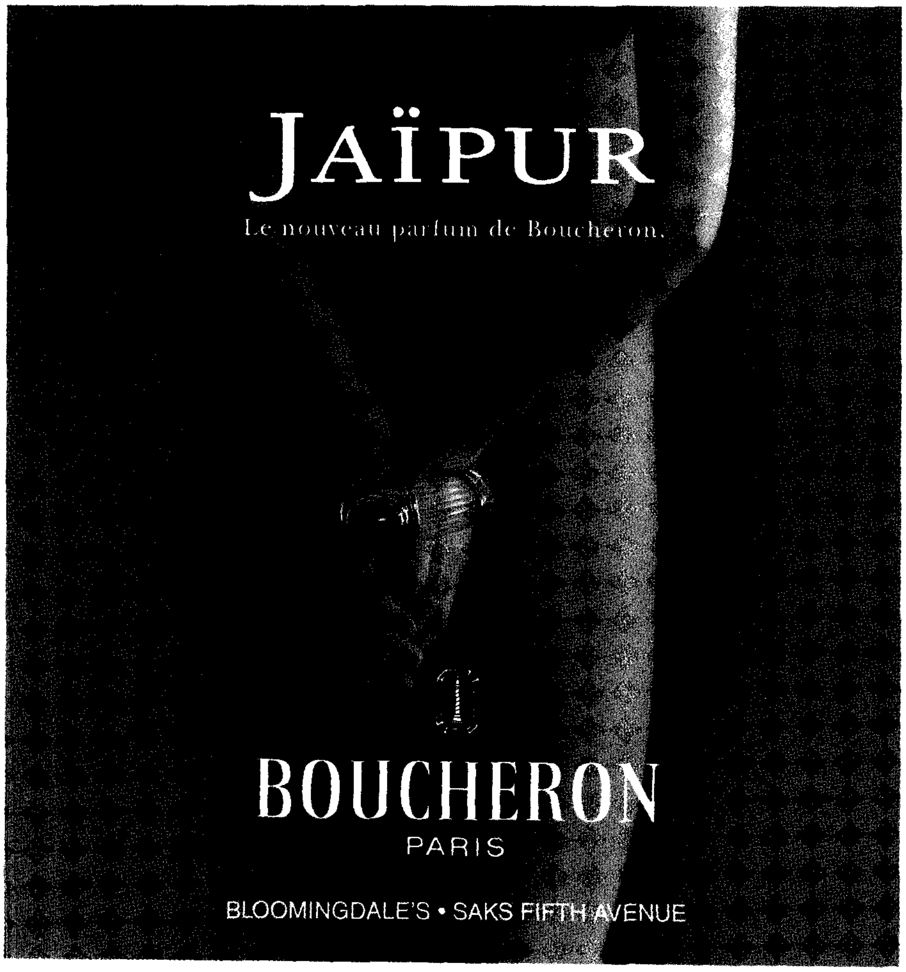
JACKIE WINSOR—New, smallish plaster-and-concrete square sculptures set into the gallery's walls. Through Oct. 21. (Cooper, 155 Wooster St.)

GROUP SHOW—Four sculptures by three Italian Arte Povera artists and an American minimalist: Luciano Fabro, Mario Merz, Pino Pascali, and Dan Flavin. Through Oct. 28. (Gladstone, 99 Greene St.)

"WOMEN ON THE VERGE (FLUXUS AND NOT)"—A rumination on the reasons that recent examples of the sixties anti-movement are considered just Fluxus, and not neo- or post-, through works by Alison Knowles, Carolee Schneeman, Yoko Ono, Yayoi Kusama, Rona Pondick, and others. Through Oct. 21. (Wimmer, 560 Broadway.)

"CRYSTAL BLUE PERSUASION"—An appealing group show consisting of both abstract and representational works in several mediums by mostly young artists, many of whom seem to have been aesthetically formed (or, depending on your perspective, deformed) by an early immersion in seventies kitsch. The art ranges from the taciturn (Franklin Preston's subdued, barely visible doodles on plastic) to the raucous (Alessandro Codagnone and John Lovett's photograph of themselves disporting in full leather S & M regalia in a conspicuously tacky suburban rec room) to the decorative (Jim Isermann's electric-blue-plaid wall hanging). Through Oct. 14. (Feature, 76 Greene St.)

"PIERCED HEARTS AND TRUE LOVE: A CENTURY OF DRAWINGS FOR TATTOOS"—In addition to hundreds of contemporary drawings and his-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torical flash, this show offers acetate stencils, photographs, tattoo-parlor signs, tools, and paraphernalia. Among the artists represented are Sailor Jerry Collins, Horiyoshi II, Stoney St. Clair, Dainty Dotty, and Charlie Malta. Through Nov. 11. (The Drawing Center, 35 Wooster St. Open Wednesday evenings until 8.)

Short List—**ALEX BAG,** 303 Gallery, 89 Greene St. Through Oct. 21. . . . **RAFAEL FERRER,** Hoffman, 429 West Broadway. Through Oct. 18. . . . **FELIX GONZALEZ-TORRES,** Rosen, 130 Prince St. Through Oct. 14. . . . **BILL JENSEN,** Boone, 417 West Broadway. Through Oct. 21. . . . **MATTHEW MC CASLIN,** Klein, 40 Wooster St. Through Oct. 14. . . . **RAYMOND PETTIBON** and **SIGMAR POLKE,** Zwirner, 43 Greene St. Through Oct. 14. . . . **DAVID RABINOWITCH,** Blum, 99 Wooster St. Through Oct. 28. . . . **ROBERT RAUSCHENBERG,** Gagosian, 136 Wooster St. Through Oct. 21. . . . **KIKI SMITH,** Pace Wildenstein, 142 Greene St. Through Oct. 21. . . . **ALESSANDRO TWOMBLY,** Kasmin, 74 Grand St. Through Oct. 14. . . . **ROYCE WEATHERLY,** Gavin Brown, *558 Broome* St. *Open Wednesdays through* Saturdays, noon to 7; through Oct. 7. . . . **RÉMY ZAUGG,** Brooke Alexander, 59 Wooster St. Opens at noon; closed Tuesdays; through Nov. 18.

OTHER VENUES

"Outsider's Insights"—More than two hundred paintings, sculptures, and objects, including a full-scale house complete with screen doors, by Earl Wayne Simmons; log and root sculptures, by Bessie Harvey; and mud-and-molasses paintings on plywood, by Jimmy lee Sudduth. A part of the Mississippi Blues Festival, at the World Financial Center. Through Oct. 8. (Liberty Street Gallery, 225 Liberty St., at West St., Battery Park City. Open Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays, 11 to 6; Wednesdays, noon to 7; Saturdays and Sundays, noon to 5. For more information, call 945-0505.)

AUCTIONS AND ANTIQUES

Sotheby's—An auction of the collection of the late Dorothy (Sister) Parish, an interior designer whose client list brimmed with Astors, Kennedys, and Rockefellers, and whose opinions informed American taste for half a century. *The two hundred and fifty lots* include striking pieces of English, American, and Continental furniture. (York Ave. at 72nd St. 606-7000. Sept. 29.)

Fall Antiques Show—Seventy-six purveyors of fine antiques gather for the seventeenth installment of this popular show, organized by Sanford Smith. (7th Regiment Armory, Park Ave. at 66th St. Sept. 28-Oct. 1. For information, call 777-5218.)

Performing Arts Bazaar—The annual flea market for collectors of music, theatre, and dance memorabilia. (New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, Lincoln Center. 870-1670. Oct. 1, from 10:30 to 4.)

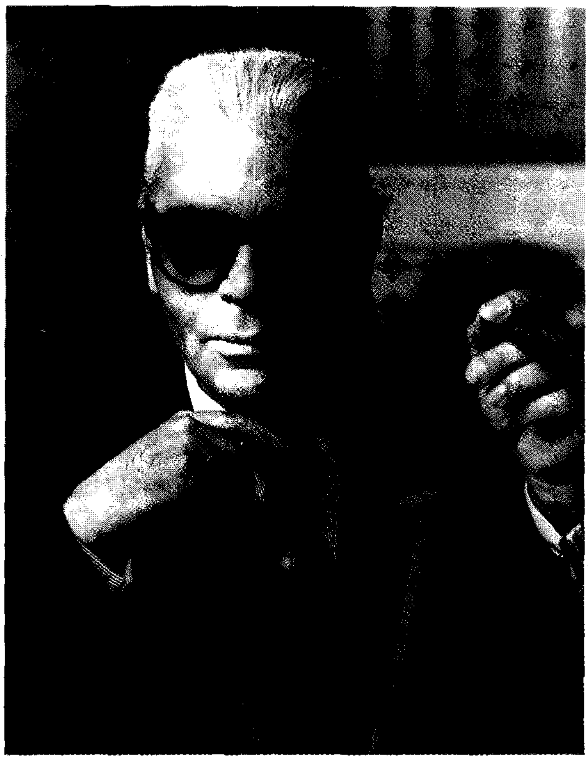
Arts and Crafts—The first auction of the season from David Rago, whose sales attract aficionados of the mission style and of turn-of-the-century decorative arts. (Metropolitan Antiques, 110 W. 19th St. 463-0200. Oct. 1 at noon.)

PHOTOGRAPHY

Dieter Appelt / Edward Weston (1886-1958)—Conceptual self-portraiture, often in the form of several photographs arranged in grids. (A retrospective of Appelt's work is at the Guggenheim Museum SoHo, through Nov. 5.) / A group of rare, vintage prints from the twenties through the early forties, along with several of the photographer's pepper and shell studies. Both shows through Oct. 14. (Pace Wildenstein MacGill, 32 E. 57th St.)

Eugène Atget (1857-1927) and **Walker Evans** (1903-75)—Talk about compare and contrast: Atget's lucid, poetic catalogue of Paris and its environs (he considered his pictures "documents") alongside Evans's rigorously unflinching pictures, with their novelistic devotion to detail. Expect architecture, interiors, city tableaux, and sculpture—not a lot of people, but volumes of character. Through Nov. 25. (Zabriskie, 724 Fifth Ave., at 57th St.)

Hans Bellmer (1902-75)—The German Surrealist's photographic activity was sporadic. Besides the well-known doll studies, he had only two other subjects—his lovers Nora Mitrani (1946) and Unica Zurn (1958)—and his explicit nudes of them are on view, along with a selection of drawings. Through Oct. 21. (Ubu, 16 E. 78th St.)



Self-portrait by Karl Lagerfeld (Leica).

Bill Burke—Black-and-white Polaroids, processed on the spot and often damaged by poor conditions, taken during trips to Vietnam, Cambodia, and Thailand. Through Nov. 4. (Gallery *292, 120 Wooster St.)*

Imogen Cunningham (1883-1976)—A survey of her long, prolific career, including portraits, figures, landscapes, cityscapes, and flowers. Through Nov. 4. (Greenberg, 120 Wooster St.)

Birney Imes—"Juke Joints," thirty color photographs of the Mississippian's most frequent subject: clubs and dilapidated restaurants like the Pink Pony Café and the Evening Star Lounge. A part of the Mississippi Blues Festival, at the World Financial Center. Through Oct. 8. (Liberty Street Gallery. See Other Venues for address and hours.)

Karl Lagerfeld—Portraits and landscapes by the German fashion designer. Through Oct. 11. (Leica, 670 Broadway. Opens Saturdays at noon.)

Sally Mann—Recent photographs of the artist's family, in which the rural Virginia landscape assumes a prominent role. Through Nov. 4. (Houk Friedman, 851 Madison Ave., at 70th St.)

Richard Misrach / Harold Edgerton (1903-90)—In the latest series from his desert explorations, Misrach looks up into the sky and comes away with *expansive—sometimes riveting—* fields of color. / "Acts of Destruction," the fascinating effects of arrows, bullets, hammers, and explosions on innocent balloons, playing cards, and telephone books. Both shows through Oct. 21. (Danziger, 130 Prince St.)

Tina Modotti (1896-1942)—Street photographs, still-lifes with puppets, and other works made in Mexico between 1923 and 1929, which reveal a unique marriage of political consciousness and formalist aesthetics. Through Nov. 4. (Throckmorton, 153 E. 61st St.)

Todd Webb / Andrew Moore—"New York, 1946," *vintage prints of scenes in Harlem, on the* Third Avenue El platform, in Chinatown, at Coney Island, and on the Lower East Side. / Large-scale works from the series "New York Variations," in which the artist conflates architectural details (from the Public Library, the old City Hall subway station, the ruins of the mental hospital on Roosevelt Island), producing poetic explorations of the city. Both shows through Oct. 15. (Richardson, 560 Broadway.)

"Being There"—The existential aspects of landscape photography as elucidated by curator Vik Muniz. Included are works by Gustave LeGray, Hiroshi Sugimoto, Richard Misrach, Gaylen Gerber, and Frederick Sommer. Through Oct. 7. (Baldacci, 41 E. 57th St.)

"Seeing Things"—Photographs from 1844 to the present, in a show that deals with the concepts of gaze and perception. Among the fifty artists are Lisette Model, August Sander, Edouard Baldus, Diane Arbus, Garry Winogrand, and Eugène Atget. Through Oct. 7. (Emmerich, 41 E. 57th St.)

"Eyewitness 1995"—The best press photographs of the past year, selected by the World Press Photo Foundation. Through Oct. 8. (North Bridge, World Financial Center, Battery Park City. Open daily, twenty-four hours.)

"The Magic of Play"—This exploration of goofing off, gaming, and having fun features more than a hundred works by twenty-two photographers, including Danny Lyon, Mary Ellen Mark, Jacques Henri Lartigue, Lewis Carroll, and Ralph Eugene Meatyard. Through Oct. 1. (Main Waiting Room, Grand Central Terminal.)

International Center of Photography, 1130 Fifth Ave., at 94th St.—"Nagasaki Journey: The Photographs of Yosuke Yamahata." Pictures taken in that city on August 10, 1945, the day after the bombing, by a twenty-eight-year-old Japanese Army photographer. Through Oct. 1. . . . ¶ The war in the Pacific, as seen through the cover photographs and photo essays of *Life*-magazine correspondents. Through Oct. 1. (Open daily, except Mondays, 11 to 6, and Tuesday evenings until 8.)

International Center of Photography Midtown, Sixth Ave. at 43rd St.—"The Garden of Earthly Delights: Photographs by Edward Weston and Robert Mapplethorpe." Still-lifes, nudes, and portraits, hung side by side in comparative groupings. Through Nov. 26. (Open daily, except Mondays, 11 to 6, and Tuesday evenings until 8.)

Short List—**JIMMY DE SANA,** Hearn, 530 W. 22nd St. Open Wednesdays through Sundays, 11 to 6; through Oct. 22. . . . **JIM DOW,** Borden, 560 Broadway. Through Oct. 16. . . . **RICHARD GERE,** Robert Miller, 41 E. 57th St. Through Oct. 14. . . . **ALLEN GINSBERG,** De Nagy, 41 W. 57th St. Through Oct. 7. . . . **FRANK GOHLKE,** Benrubi, 52 E. 76th St. Through Oct. 14. . . . **FRANK HORVAT,** Staley-Wise, 560 Broadway. Through Oct. 21. . . . **JUDY LINN,** Feature, 76 Greene St. Through Oct. 14. . . . **MARILYN MINTER,** Postmasters, 80 Greene St. Through Oct. 8. . . . **ALEXANDER RODCHENKO,** Schickler, 52 E. 76th St. Through Oct. 31. . . . **WILLY RONIS,** Witkin, 415 West Broadway. Through Oct. 28. . . . **PENELOPE UMBRICO,** Saul, 560 Broadway. Through Oct. 14. . . . **BOYD WEBB,** Sonnabend, 420 West Broadway. Through Oct. 21.

(See the museum listings for photography exhibitions at the Museum of Modern Art, the Guggenheim Museum SoHo, and Dia Center for the Arts.)

CLASSICAL MUSIC

(The box-office number for the Metropolitan Opera House is 362-6000, and for Merkin Concert Hall, 129 W. 67th St., 362-8719.)

OPERA

Metropolitan Opera—Opening performances of the company's hundred-and-twelfth season (its first with a translation/titling system), which will run through April 27. **otello,** with Renée Fleming, Plácido Domingo, and James Morris; conducted by James Levine. (Oct. 2 at 7.) . . . **aida,** with Nina Rautio, Dolora Zajick, Kristján Jóhannsson, and Timothy Noble; Christian Badea. (Oct. 3 at 8.) (Metropolitan Opera House.)

New York City Opera—don giovanni. (Sept. 27 at 8.) . . . **carmen.** (Sept. 29 at 8.) . . . **rigoletto.** (Sept. 30 at 1:30.) . . . **tosca.** (Sept. 30 at 8.) . . . **the mikado.** (Oct. 1 at 1:30.) (New York State Theatre. 870-5570.)

"La Belle et la Bête"—Philip Glass's Cocteau-based film-opera, back again. (Kaye Playhouse, Hunter College, Park Ave. at 68th St. 772-4448. Sept. 27-30 at 8 and Oct. 1 at 3. Through Oct. 7.)

ORCHESTRAS AND CHORUSES

New York Philharmonic—Kurt Masur conducts Bach's Fifth "Brandenburg" Concerto (featuring violinist Glenn Dicterow, flutist Jeanne Baxtresser, and harpsichordist Michael Schönheit), as well as the U.S. première of Paul Dessau's 1963 "Bach Variations" (which employs one theme by Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach and two by his renowned father) and Mendelssohn's chorale-drenched Symphony No. 5 (the "Reformation"). (Avery Fisher Hall. 875-5030. Sept. 28 at 8 and Sept. 29 at 11 a.m.)

Manhattan Chamber Orchestra—Playing the premières of works by Seymour Barab and Otto Luening, as well as pieces by Poulenc, Ibert (his "Symphonie Marine"), and Milhaud ("La Création du Monde"). Richard Auldon Clark conducts. (Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. 864-5400. Sept. 27 at 8.)

Music by Mary Jane Leach—Play or sing two tones simultaneously and, if the timbres and intonation correspond in a certain way, a third note seems to hover, ghostlike, in the background. This is the realm of combination tones, difference tones, and interference tones—an acoustic "Through the Looking Glass" world based on sounds that the performer is *not* making. Ms. Leach is fond of these ethereal phenomena, which are among the techniques she explores in the six choral works on this program, performed by the New York Treble Singers and Bucknell University's Rooke Chapel Choir. (Fifth Avenue Presbyterian Church, Fifth Ave. at 55th St. Sept. 29 at 7:30. Tickets at the door on the evening of the concert.)

Bach Around the Clock—Actually for just nine hours or so, but lotsa the Leipzig master all the same. Sept. 30 at 1: A recital by the young Welsh organist Iain Quinn. . . . ¶ At 2: An organ recital by Gail Archer. . . . ¶ At 3: Chamber music with the Trio Bell'Arte. . . . ¶ At 4: "The Art of Fugue," played by organist Walter Hilse. . . . ¶ At 8: Thomas Schmidt leads the St. Peter's Choir and an instrumental ensemble in a program that includes the First "Brandenburg" Concerto, the motet "Jesu, Meine Freude," and the Cantata No. 79. (St. Peter's Church, Lexington Ave. at 54th St. 935-2200.)

Absolute Ensemble—Presenting music by Wojciech Kilar, Erkki-Sven Tüür, and Kenneth Lampl (the première of his Rhapsody for Piano and Orchestra, with David Buechner), as well as Mozart's "Jupiter" Symphony. Kristjan Järvi conducts. (Merkin Concert Hall. Oct. 1 at 2.)

American Symphony Orchestra—Composers in the Soviet Union had some choices when it came to melding their art with political demands. In the opening concert of the American Symphony's new season (which adheres to the ensemble's think-tank approach), Leon Botstein conducts works that illuminate three methods of Soviet musical survival: Nicolai Miaskovsky's Symphony No. 21 (he wrote twenty-seven; this one took the 1940 Stalin Prize by pretending that not much had changed since the glory days of Russia's Romantic masters), Tikhon Khrennikov's Violin Concerto No. 2 (forceful social realism by the most adept of the musical politicians), and Shostakovich's ultimate symphony, his Fifteenth (ostensibly a musical autobiography, in which the composer precariously toes the party line and thumbs his nose at the same time). Juliette Kang is the soloist in the concerto. (Avery Fisher Hall. 875-5030. Oct. 1 at 3, with a pre-concert lecture at 1:30.)

RECITALS

Music and Dance—The Miller Theatre's season opener courts both music lovers and dance aficionados. Peter Serkin and the Guarneri Quartet offer Brahms's Piano Quintet in a program that also includes a new version of an "event" choreographed by Merce Cunningham. (Columbia University, Broadway at 116th St. 854-7799. Sept. 27 at 7:30.)

Music by John Ireland—The ambivalence starts with his name—he was English—and extends to his musical style, which ranged from German Romanticism to French Impressionism, Russian Primitivism, and (as was obligatory for early-twentieth-century British composers) English Nostalgia. Pianist Robert Helps, clarinettist Brian Moorhead, and cellist Scott Kluksdahl offer a selection of the composer's solo and chamber works. (Merkin Concert Hall. Sept. 28 at 8.)

Four Nations Ensemble—The period-instrument group embarks on a season that invites soul-searching: each of its three concerts includes pieces depicting different mortal sins. Wrath

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bursts forth in this installment, in Clérambault's cantata "Médée" (with soprano Christine Brandes); other sins will make cameo appearances in works by Corelli, Handel, and Telemann, among others. (Miller Theatre, Columbia University, Broadway at 116th St. 854-7799. Sept. 28 at 8.)

Percussion Quartets—Two come knocking this week. Sept. 30 at 8: An unnamed foursome offers the première of "Veins (for 4 Musicians)" by Tim Rowe, who confides that he is currently composing "a large work for electric hums and white paint." (La Mama Galleria, 6 E. 1st St. Admission by contribution.) . . . ¶ Oct. 2 at 8: The Talujon Percussion Quartet performs music by Cage, Chou Wen Chung, and others. (Washington Square Church, 135 W. 4th St. Tickets at the door on the night of the concert.)

"Zoom: Composers Close Up"—An hour-long talk-and-play confab spotlighting composer Sebastian Currier and the Cassatt String Quartet. (Merkin Concert Hall. Sept. 30 at 9. For information about free tickets, which are required, call 362-8719.)

LISTENING BOOTH

Mendelssohn's "Paulus"; Das Neue Orchester and Chorus Musicus Köln, conducted by Christoph Spering (Opus 111). Mendelssohn's Bach fixation is well known: the "St. Matthew Passion" performance he organized in 1829—the first in nearly a century—launched a Bach revival that hasn't abated since, and neo-Bachian, chorale-based writing pervades Mendelssohn's mature work (his "Reformation" Symphony makes a rare appearance on this week's New York Philharmonic programs). When Mendelssohn unveiled his oratorio "Paulus" ("St. Paul"), in 1836, critics objected so strenuously to the composer's extensive nonliturgical use of chorales that a decade later he foreswore them in "Elijah." The latter may be the greater masterpiece, but that probably won't cross your mind as you listen to this stunning new recording of "Paulus," every measure of which is lovingly crafted. The solo singing (especially from soprano Soile Isokoski and tenor Rainer Trost) is top-shelf, and a splendid chorus and a finely honed period-instrument orchestra show off Mendelssohn's textures the way a cleaning reveals an old painting's true colors. The Opus 111 label brings its usual high production standards to bear.

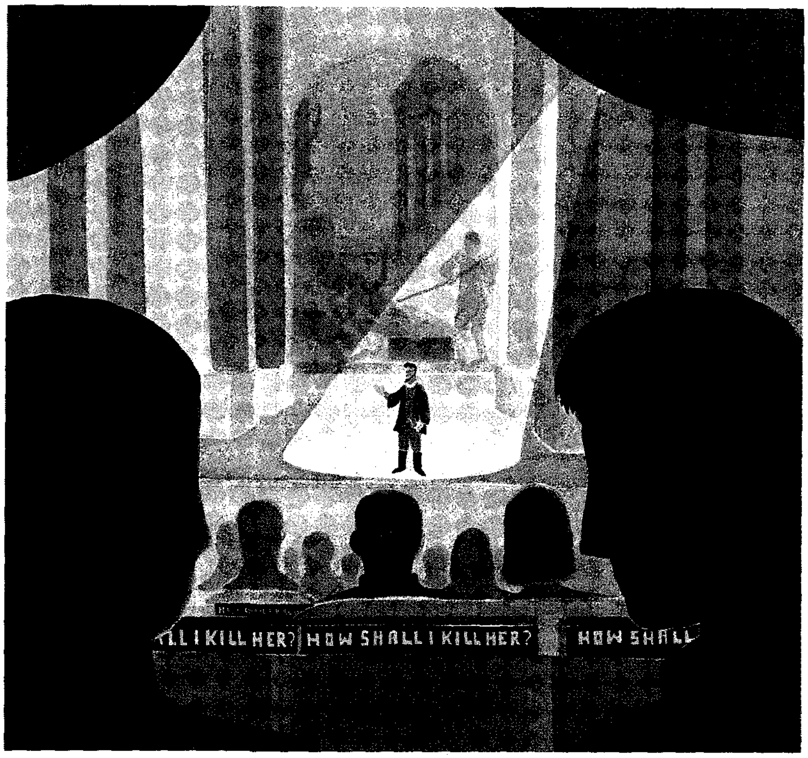
Special Arrangements—Wind players hungry for repertoire owe a debt to the Israeli bassoonist Mordechai Rechtman, whose transcriptions of classics have become staples of woodwind and brass ensembles. For the next four weeks, Le Refuge's concert series will feature his arrangements, beginning with brass-trio transcriptions from Bach, Haydn, and Mozart. (Le Refuge Inn, 620 City Island Ave., City Island, the Bronx. 1-718 885-2478. Oct. 1 at noon.)

Pedro Burmester—The Portuguese pianist performs Schubert's Twelve Ländler (D. 790) and A-Minor Sonata (D. 784), Beethoven's "Moonlight" Sonata, and Ravel's "La Valse" and "Gaspard de la Nuit." (Frick Collection, 1 E. 70th St. 288-0700. Oct. 1 at 5.)

Something Fishy—Schubert's "Trout" quintet (with scales intact) shares the bill with a duet for cello and double bass by Rossini. (Hotel Wales, Madison Ave. at 92nd St. Oct. 1 at 6 and 8. No tickets necessary.)

ABOVE AND BEYOND

Heat Wave—The Chili Pepper Fiesta this Sunday at the Brooklyn Botanic Garden celebrates the full atomic range of the explosive fruit, from the Portuguese peri-peri (with a heat rating of one) to the habanero,


…LL I KILL HER? HOW SHALL I KILL HER? HOW SHALL

Plácido Domingo, in "Otello," at the Metropolitan Opera House.

GEOFFREY PARKER

grown on the Yucatan peninsula (the world's hottest, at ten). The schedule is spiced with cooking demonstrations, by (among others) Thai chef Prapap Kongsmai, Bangladesh native Uddin Salah, and Pennsylvanian Joseph (Pepper Joe) Arditi, as well as fiery dancing by performers from the Peruvian Taky Llaqta troupe and the Thai Vajiradhammapadip Temple. (Washington Ave. at Eastern Parkway. Oct. 1, from 10 to 6. For schedule information, call 1-718 622-4433, ext. 248.)

Get a Life—This weekend's NewLife Expo '95, at the Hotel New Yorker (no relation), offers a New Age bazaar: Maitake (the King of Mushrooms), Serenity "2000," Cell Tech Super Blue Green Algae, personal breath consultants, etc. Lectures ("The Tao of Voice," "The Magic of Hyssop," "The Impossible Is Now Possible YES"), which are free with admission, are often shorter versions of more intensive workshops (such as "You Create Your Life" with Billy Blank), scheduled for later in the expo. (Eighth Ave. at 34th St., with some additional lectures and workshops at the Hotel Pennsylvania, Seventh Ave. at 33rd St. Sept. 29, from 3 to 10; Sept. 30, from 10 to 10; and Oct. 1, from 10 to 9. For more information, call 787-1600.)

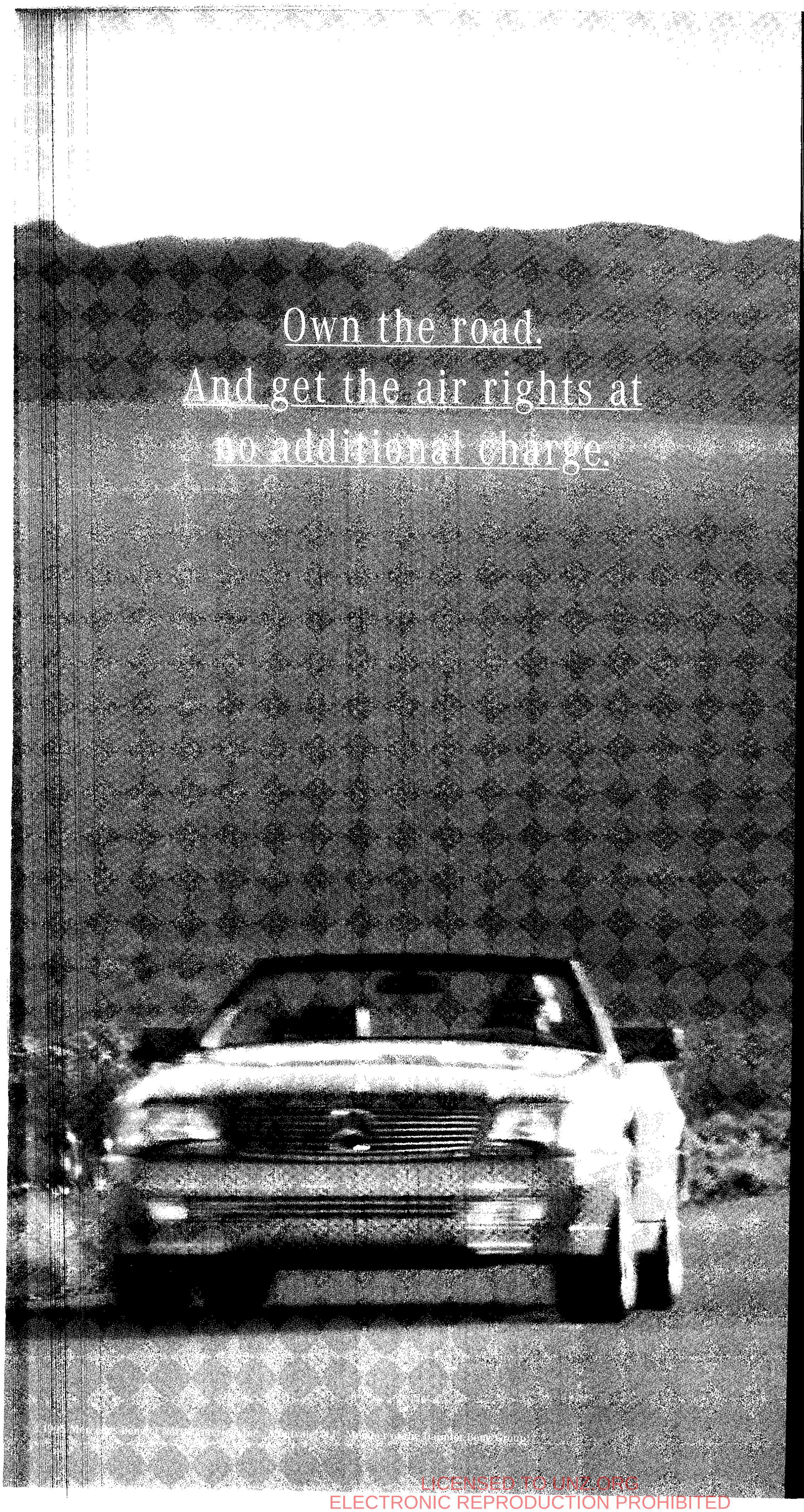
"Working the Port"—Sailors, longshoremen, tugboat captains, filleters, riggers, coopers, and scholars gather for a conference and festival celebrating maritime work and culture. In addition to lectures at the Seamen's Church Institute (on contemporary labor issues, at 9 A.M., and on the nineteenth-century culture of the seas, at 2), artisans will demonstrate rope work, woodcarving, and tattoo art at the festival, on Pier 16, from noon to 5. (241 Water St. Oct. 1. To register for lectures, call the South Street Seaport Museum, at 748-8755. The festival on the pier is free.)

"The World of Pooh"—Starting Thursday, children in the Pooh stage can enjoy a romp through the Hundred Acre Wood, at the Children's Museum of Manhattan. In the museum version, Mr. Sander's House is a reading area, Kanga and Roo live by an arts-and-crafts corner, Eeyore's twig house has turned into an architectural think tank (with building blocks), and Owl keeps a telescope in his tree house. (212 W. 83rd St. 721-1234. Opens Sept. 28.)

Readings—Sept. 29 at 7:30: Bob Holman opens the Friday-night poetry slam with a reading from "The Collect Call of the Wild," his latest book of poems. The Cowboy Poets—Sue Wallis, Rod McQueary, and Paul Zarzyski—will also appear. (Nuyorican Poets Café, 236 E. 3rd St. 505-8183.) . . . ¶ Sept. 30 at 8: Writers Ai, Paul Auster, Robert McDowell, David Mura, and Carol Muske read from their work, at the final event of the two-day Narrative Impulse Festival. (New School, 66 W. 12th St. 254-9628.) . . . ¶ Oct. 2 at 8: Saul Bellow reads from his work. (92nd Street Y, Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 996-1100.)

Talks—Sept. 28 at 9:45 A.M.: At a forum on the global refugee crisis, Semir Tanovic (from Bosnia), Marjorie Mitchell (from Liberia), and Kin Sann Myint (from Myanmar) describe their escapes from their homelands. (Low Library, Columbia University, Broadway at 116th St. For a schedule of conference events, call 854-4437.) . . . ¶ Sept. 28 at 12:30: George P. Horse Capture, of the National Museum of the American Indian, talks about Native American reactions to the slaughter of the buffalo. (Fraunces Tavern Museum, 54 Pearl St. No charge beyond museum admission.) . . . ¶ Sept. 29 at 3:45: Poets John Hollander and Mark Strand and poet and novelist Joyce Carol Oates discuss Edward Hopper's appeal to poets. (City University Graduate Center, 33 W. 42nd St. For information about other events at the Hopper conference, call 642-2684.)

Memorandum—Those who cut across the southwest corner of Union Square this week will note a profusion of marigolds draped around the statue of Mohandas K. Gandhi. According to Victoria Farmer, of the Asia Society, the garlands are offered throughout India on special occasions as tokens of respect—to politicians, actors, sitarists; during a mini-series about the Hindu god Rama, they were even left in front of TV sets. Gandhi, who cannot, as is customary, decline the garlands offered to him, would have been a hundred and twenty-six this Monday.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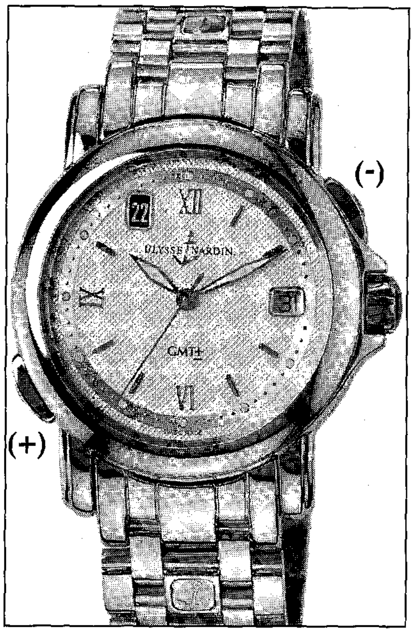

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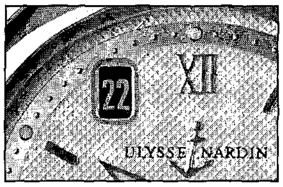

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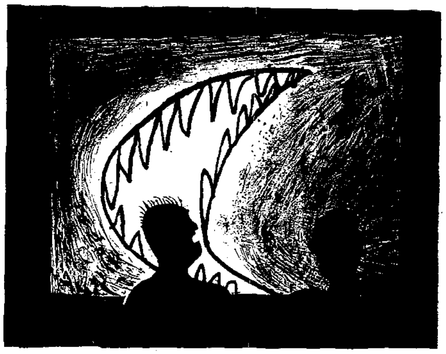
THE MOVIES



FILMS OPENING THIS WEEK

The Big Green—A British schoolteacher (Olivia D'Abo) revitalizes a small Texas town by introducing her students to soccer, in a comedy written and directed by Holly Goldberg Sloan. Opening September 29. (Village Theatre VII, 86th Street East Twin, Chelsea Cinemas, Guild, and Lincoln Square.)

Devil in a Blue Dress—Denzel Washington and Jennifer Beals star in Carl Franklin's adaptation of Walter Mosley's 1990 detective novel. (Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema.) Opening September 29. (Village Theatre VII, 19th Street East 6, Gemini, Orpheum VII, 84th Street Sixplex, and National Twin.)

Halloween: The Curse of Michael Myers—The latest chapter shows why he did it—maybe. Directed by Joe Chappelle. Opening September 29. (Movieland 8th Street Triplex and Embassy.)

The Jar—A drama about life in a desert village, by the Iranian director Ebrahim Foruzesh. In Persian. Opening September 27. (Film Forum.)

Moonlight and Valentino—A young widow (Elizabeth Perkins) faces the sudden loss of her husband with the help of her best friend (Whoopi Goldberg), her younger sister (Gwyneth Paltrow), her former stepmother (Kathleen Turner), and a housepainter (Jon Bon Jovi), in a comedy directed by David Anspaugh and written by Ellen Simon. Opening September 29. (Village East Cinemas, 19th Street East 6, New York Twin, and Lincoln Square.)

Persuasion—Reviewed below in Current Films. Opening September 27.

Prince Brat and the Whipping Boy—A spoiled young prince (Nic Knight) runs away from his castle with an orphan (Truan Munro), in a fairy tale set in eighteenth-century Europe. With George C. Scott. Directed by Syd Macartney. Adapted by Max Brindle from a 1986 children's book by Sid Fleischman. Opening September 27. (Lincoln Square.)

Steal Big, Steal Little—Andy Garcia takes on two roles, as twin brothers fighting over a real-estate inheritance in Santa Barbara, in a comedy-drama directed by Andrew Davis. Also with Alan Arkin. Written by the director, Lee Blessing, Jeanne Blake, and Terry Kahn. Opening September 29. (Criterion Center.)

To Die For—Reviewed below in Current Films. Opening September 27.

CURRENT FILMS

(The signed notes are by Bruce Diones, Anthony Lane, and Terrence Rafferty. If a movie has been reviewed in The Current Cinema, the date of its review is given. Theatre addresses are listed on page 32; for show times, call 777-FILM.)

Beyond Rangoon—John Boorman's mysteriously graceful adventure movie is set in Burma in 1988. A depressed American traveller (Patricia Arquette) becomes separated from her tour group and enters the dense, dangerous wilderness of the real Burma, where she falls into the company of political dissidents and winds up running for her life. Boorman's sense of rhythm gives the picture an arrowlike momentum that makes it seem much shorter than its ninety-nine minutes. It's an exciting film and, in the end, an overwhelmingly moving one—a masterpiece. Also with U Aung Ko, Frances McDormand, and Spalding Gray.—T.R. (8/21-28/95) (Movieland 8th Street Triplex, First & 62nd Cinemas, 23rd St. West Triplex, and Lincoln Square.)

Clockers—The new Spike Lee picture is adapted from the 1992 thriller by Richard Price (the two collaborated on the screenplay), but thrills are low on the agenda of this nervy, knowing tale, which bristles with jokes and social problems where you would expect the plot to be. The clockers of the title—low-grade crack dealers who work the Brooklyn projects at all hours—belong to the only successful business in the neighborhood, an irony that gets the movie nicely fired up. Harvey Keitel plays a tired racist cop, and newcomer Mekhi Phifer a black kid suspected of murder, but neither of them is used as a star: instead Lee wants to build an ensemble piece and bring a small world onto the screen. To a large extent, he succeeds. The film shares the social ambitions, but not the mania, of "Do the Right Thing." Though Lee still can't resist a fancy visual trick from time to time, "Clockers" is, at its best—in its compound of the jaunty and the depressing—his ripest work to date.—A.L. (9/18/95) (34th Street Showplace, Manhattan Twin, Park & 86th Street Cinemas, Waverly, Chelsea Cinemas, 62nd & Broadway, Metro Cinema, and National Twin.)

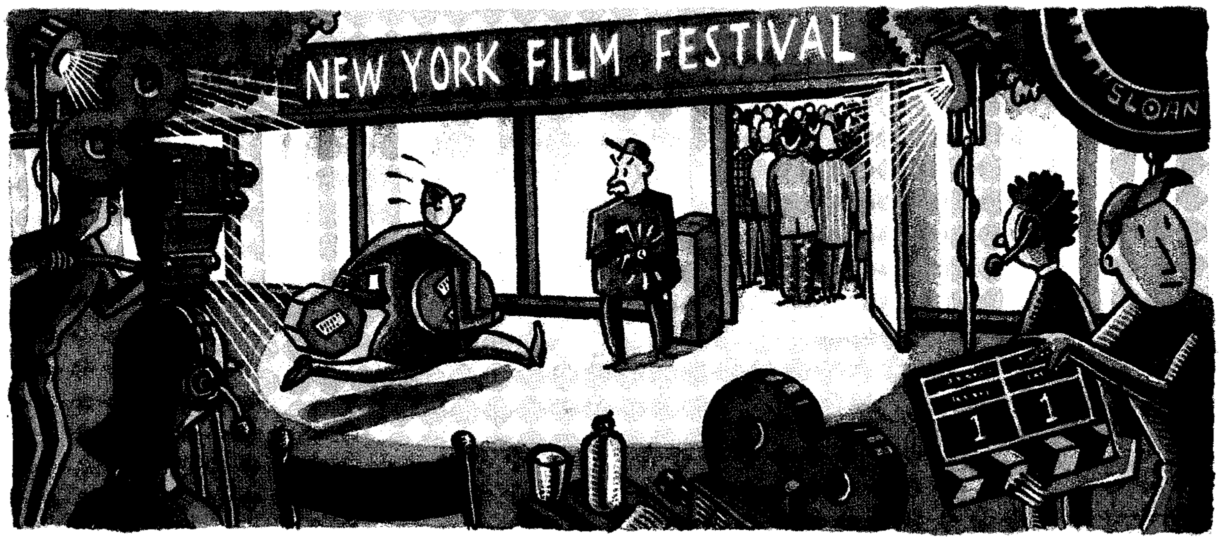
Desperado—Director Robert Rodriguez follows up his cult feature "El Mariachi" with a similar story in an identical setting, throws in a big star, and comes up with the same old thing—fun with guns. The plot is not exactly Balzacian in its complexity; the movie's pleasures derive from the smart editing (Rodriguez did his own cutting, and he's quicker on the draw than most of the pistol-packers) and from Antonio Banderas, who, stepping neatly into the Mariachi's boots, lends irony and calm, and even a trace of sweetness, to a nothing role. Without him the picture would remain a hollow, high-speed exercise in style.—A.L. (9/11/95) (19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, 84th Street Sixplex, and Embassy. . . . ¶ Movieland 8th Street Triplex; through Sept. 28.)

Hackers—This movie, about a group of Internet-surfing teen-agers who hack into a computer system and become targets of a terrorist conspiracy, moves like a good episode of a hip Fox TV show. The director, Iain Softley, is a lover of fast cuts, and he has done one of the neater jobs of incorporating video techniques and effects into a film. The design is impressive, the sensational techno score adds drive to the action, and the two gorgeous leads (Jonny Lee Miller and Angelina Jolie) smolder nicely. The story is negligible, but it offers the same order of fun as a good rock video: the marriage of images and music.—B.D. (19th Street East 6, 34th Street Showplace, First & 62nd Cinemas, Orpheum VII, Waverly, 84th Street Sixplex, and Criterion Center.)

Last of the Dogmen—It begins like an ordinary prison-break movie, but when a bounty hunter (Tom Berenger, in a strong, sexy performance) is hired to track the escapees, the terrain turns unfriendly in a premodern way. The bounty hunter and an anthropologist (Barbara Hershey) follow the prisoners' trail into a remote territory occupied by a tribe of Cheyennes untouched by the twentieth century; and the writer-director, Tab Murphy, trots out seventies-era plotting (with modern life corrupting proud tradition) and pours "Dances with Wolves" syrup over cinematographer Karl Walter Lindenlaub's beautiful images. There are some tense scenes, and the mystery of the escape takes some time to unravel, but the movie shrivels up and dies from piousness.—B.D. (Cinema 3.)

A Month by the Lake—Vanessa Redgrave, Edward Fox, and Uma Thurman star in a love story set on the shores of Lake Como just before the Second World War. Directed by John Irvin. Written by Trevor Bentham, from H. E. Bates's 1964 novella. (Village East Cinemas, 68th St. Playhouse, and Lincoln Square.)

Mute Witness—A suspense film that tips its hat to "Blow Out" in its opening minutes is setting its sights high. Writer-director Anthony Waller has fashioned his story, about a mute special-effects expert who thinks she has witnessed a murder, as an exercise in early and middle-period De Palma—and he almost pulls it off. By shooting in Moscow, in washed-out blues and browns, he has created an intriguing low-budget seventies-style environment that recalls "Sisters." Marina Sudina, whose face has the pretty innocence of Nancy Allen's, plays the special-effects expert, and the canny idea of making her mute gives Waller the chance to do long, tense scenes without dialogue, as in "Dressed to Kill." His technique is impressive; the film falls flat only when he attempts to make the frightening funny. But the plot makes some nice twists and turns, the tension builds a good head of steam, and the tawdriness never lets up.—B.D. (Village East Cinemas, 19th Street East 6, First & 62nd Cinemas, East 85th Street, and 84th Street Sixplex. . . . ¶ Embassy 1; through Sept. 28. . . . ¶ Embassy; starting Sept. 29.)



Starting September 29, the 33rd New York Film Festival.

MICHAEL SLOAN

Nadja—An eerie comedy written and directed by Michael Almereyda (and produced by David Lynch), based on the Dracula legend but updated and filmed in New York City; the splendid black-and-white cinematography, by Jim DeNault, evokes the old Universal horror pictures. The story, which begins after Dr. Van Helsing (played with goofy charm by Peter Fonda) has killed Dracula, concerns his efforts to track down the vampire's twin children. It's intended as a flippant take on the monsters that hide inside dysfunctional families, but the uneven mix of eroticism and one-liners doesn't always work, and Nadja, Dracula's daughter, though she is well played by Elina Löwensohn, comes off like some druggy East Village chick looking to score.—B.D. (Angelika Film Center.)

Persuasion—The young British director Roger Michell has done what always seemed impossible. He has made a Jane Austen movie that is never pretty and only occasionally charming; instead, it is troubled, astringent, and touched with melancholy—not unlike the novel. Amanda Root, almost out-mousing Isabelle Huppert in reticence, plays Anne Elliot, who once turned down Frederick Wentworth (Ciaran Hinds, who has the profile of a Regency miniature) and has regretted it ever since. They come together again—in the country, by the sea, and on the streets of Bath—and you can guess the outcome. But Michell somehow tenses a simple narrative into suspense; the camera catches every glance between the former lovers and probes every scene for signs of hope. Anyone expecting verbal Ping-Pong and unspotted elegance will be disappointed: Anne's dress gets caught in the mud, and her sister, Mary (a fine turn from Sophie Thompson), talks through a mouthful of pie. With Corin Redgrave as Anne's monstrous father, and Fiona Shaw as the worldly wife of an admiral.—A.L. (9/25/95) (Paris; starting Sept. 27.)

The Run of the Country—A teen-ager (Matt Keeslar) in County Cavan, Ireland, runs away from his stern father (Albert Finney) and falls in love with a young woman from northern Ireland (Victoria Smurfit). Directed by Peter Yates. Adapted by Shane Connaughton from his 1991 novel. (Village Theatre VII, 19th Street East 6, Baronet, and Lincoln Square.)

Seven—The murders in David Fincher's serial-killer mystery are grisly tableaux, each artfully arranged to illustrate one of the seven deadly sins: a fat man is force-fed until his stomach bursts, a lazy man is strapped to his bed and allowed to waste away, and so on. This kind of self-conscious literary conceit can work if it's handled with a light, parodic touch. Unfortunately, the movie's clammy design, glum cinematography, and lugubrious pace try to persuade us that what we're watching isn't an ingenious, silly piece of pulp but a serious meditation on the nature of evil. The police detectives—weary old Somerset (Morgan Freeman) and brash young Mills (Brad Pitt)—search for clues by flashlight, at crime scenes where, typically, the only other source of light is a lamp with a twenty-five-watt bulb. And when the action moves outdoors, it's always raining—sheets of water on the windshield keep the morose cops sealed off from the rest of the world even while they drive on busy streets. Freeman, with his immense dignity and authority, manages to keep his head above water, but Pitt goes under. Fincher, whose background is in commercials and music videos, doesn't seem to understand that narrative filmmaking requires something more than a striking look; a style that's effective for three minutes can become awfully tiresome stretched over a hundred and twenty-eight. The movie seems to last an eternity, and that's with only seven sins to account for—just be thankful that the murders aren't patterned on the Ninety-five Theses of Martin Luther. Also with Gwyneth Paltrow.—T.R. (Village Theatre VII, 19th Street East 6, Murray Hill Cinemas, Cinema I, Cinema 3rd Avenue, Orpheum VII, Lincoln Square, and Criterion Center.)

Showgirls—An erotic thriller by Paul Verhoeven, about an ambitious lap dancer (Elizabeth Berkley) in Las Vegas. With Kyle MacLachlan. Written by Joe Eszterhas. (Village Theatre VII, 34th Street Showplace, First & 62nd Cinemas, Orpheum VII, Chelsea Cinemas, Lincoln Square, Olympia, and Criterion Center.)

The Stars Fell on Henrietta—Robert Duvall plays a broke but ambitious oilman prospecting in a small Texas town during the Depression. With Aidan Quinn, Frances Fisher, and Brian Dennehy. Directed by James Keach. Written by Philip Railsback. (Lincoln Square.)

Theremin—An Electronic Odyssey—Steven M. Martin's documentary, about the inventor of the first electronic musical instrument, is a strange and moving piece of work. Professor Theremin's life was full of mystery and intrigue, and the filmmakers unearth some bizarre turns of events. Much of the movie belongs to his protégée, Clara Rockmore, a theremin virtuoso; her recollections give the film its emotional weight, while theremin music enhances its spooky, somewhat hypnotic feel.—B.D. (Cinema Village.)

To Die For—Director Gus Van Sant's latest movie is his funniest, but also his least adventurous. Adapted by Buck Henry from Joyce Maynard's 1992 novel, it tells the story of Suzanne Stone (Nicole Kidman, pushy and perky), a suburban nobody who, bored with her husband (Matt Dillon), decides to become a somebody in the world of television. She joins a local station, starts to shoot a documentary about three schoolkids, and gradually lures them into her web. You expect Suzanne to ascend to great things, but the fame she craves turns out to be no less parochial than the town she despises. The film is smartly structured, and it's kicked along by a busy Danny Elfman score, but Van Sant's touch is uncertain: the story's satirical bite begins to loosen as his camera lingers more and more on the plain, disaffected teen-agers. One of them is played by Joaquin Phoenix, whose brother River was so extraordinary in "My Own Private Idaho"; it's as though Van Sant longs to recapture the wayward, carnal atmosphere of the earlier movie but finds himself locked in a smaller, more brittle project. The film does for him what "The Player" did for Altman: it proves his cleverness and the sharpness of his eye without ever giving him full

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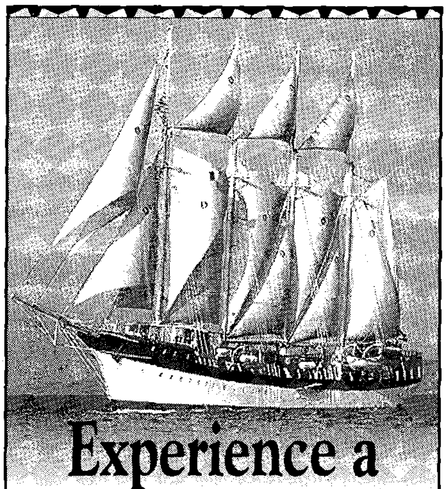

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rein.—A.L. (Village Theatre VII, Chelsea Cinemas, and Lincoln Square; starting Sept. 27.)

To Wong Foo, Thanks for Everything, Julie Newmar—It may be a surprise to watch Patrick Swayze, Wesley Snipes, and John Leguizamo dress up in glowing silks, but it's nothing more than a surprise, and it doesn't last—the director, Beeban Kidron, has a tough time trying to mold candy floss into a dramatic shape. The bitchy threesome set off on a cross-country trip and pitch camp in a small Midwestern town, where they urge the locals to go a little wild. It's a pity that no one worked the same magic on the movie. Everything about it feels so safe, sedentary, and sexless that the leads might as well have worn gray suits.—A.L. (9/11/95) (34th St. East, Coronet, Orpheum VII, Art Greenwich Twin, Chelsea Cinemas, Lincoln Square, Olympia, and National Twin.)

Unstrung Heroes—The way that the director, Diane Keaton, examines a Jewish family with an outsider's eye mirrors Woody Allen's take on Protestants: she records the messy, hyperactive lives of two crazy Jewish men with a similar exaggeration of their ethnic tendencies. The story, about a boy who goes to live with his uncles in a time of crisis (his mother is dying), is based on sportswriter Franz Lidz's 1991 memoir; the script, by Richard LaGravenese, spins sentimental cotton candy around the experience. Keaton's style is fluid and detailed, and she gets lovely performances from her actors, particularly Maury Chaykin, as the neurotic uncle who clutters his nest with old newspapers and junk, and John Turturro, as the boy's sad, down-to-earth dad. In the end, though, the film is undone by its shaky premise that crazy people are more in touch with life than their rational counterparts. It tries too hard to make lunacy endearing.—B.D. (Village East Cinemas, Cinema II, Chelsea Cinemas, and Lincoln Square.)

The Usual Suspects—A treat. Five criminals, ranging from petty to pro, are herded into a police lineup on suspicion of armed robbery. They walk, but not before joining forces to plan a new crime—a bright idea that soon darkens with treachery and ends in a bulk order of dead bodies. Director Bryan Singer and screenwriter Christopher McQuarrie somehow keep from getting lost in the spiralling plot, a game in which everyone—the good, the bad, and the audience—gets to play sucker. Singer's style may overheat now and then, but his cast, headed by Chazz Palminteri and Kevin Spacey, keeps things cool.—A.L. (8/14/95) (Village Theatre VII, 19th Street East 6, New York Twin, and Lincoln Square.)

ALSO PLAYING

ANGUS: Village East Cinemas and Orpheum VII. . . . **APOLLO 13** (reviewed in our issue of 7/10/95): 23rd St. West Triplex, Ziegfeld, and Regency. . . . **BABE** (9/4/95): 59th Street East Cinema, 23rd St. West Triplex, and Lincoln Square. . . . **BATMAN FOREVER** (7/10/95): Worldwide Cinemas. . . . **BELLE DE JOUR:** Village East Cinemas, Eastside Playhouse, and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas. . . . **BRAVEHEART** (6/5/95): New York Twin, Orpheum VII, 23rd St. West Triplex, and Embassy. . . . **THE BROTHERS MC MULLEN:** Angelika Film Center, First & 62nd Cinemas, Chelsea Cinemas, and Lincoln Square. . . . **BURNT BY THE SUN** (5/8/95): Carnegie Hall Cinemas. . . . **CANADIAN BACON:** Village East Cinemas and 84th Street Sixplex. . . . **CASPER:** Worldwide Cinemas. . . . **CLUELESS:** Movieland 8th Street Triplex and 59th Street East Cinema. . . . **CRUMB** (5/1/95): Film Forum 3. . . . **DANGEROUS MINDS** (8/21-28/95): Orpheum VII and Guild. . . . **DIE HARD WITH A VENGEANCE** (5/29/95): Worldwide Cinemas. . . . **FIRST KNIGHT** (7/17/95): Worldwide Cinemas. . . . **FREE WILLY 2: THE ADVENTURE HOME:** Worldwide Cinemas. . . . **THE INCREDIBLY TRUE ADVENTURE OF TWO GIRLS IN LOVE:** Worldwide Cinemas. . . . **THE INNOCENT:** Village East Cinemas and Sutton. . . . **JEFFREY:** Quad Cinema and Carnegie Hall Cinemas. . . . **KIDS** (7/31/95): Angelika Film Center, Gemini, and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas. . . . **LIVING IN OBLIVION:** Angelika Film Center and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas. . . . **LORD OF ILLUSIONS:** Criterion Center. . . . **MORTAL KOMBAT:** Criterion Center. . . . **THE NET** (8/7/95): Gemini. . . . **THE OLD LADY WHO WALKED IN THE SEA:** Quad Cinema and Angelika 57. . . . **THE POSTMAN:** Village East Cinemas, Murray Hill Cinemas, Sutton, 86th Street East Twin, and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas. . . . **THE PROMISE:** Quad Cinema and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas. . . . **THE PROPHECY:** Movieland 8th Street Triplex, Murray Hill Cinemas, Sutton, 86th Street East Twin, Chelsea Cinemas, and Astor Plaza. . . . **A REASON TO BELIEVE:** Plaza and Quad Cinema. . . . **SMOKE:** Angelika Film Center, Gotham Cinema, 86th Street East Twin, and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas. . . . **TIE-DIED: ROCK 'N ROLL'S MOST DEADICATED FANS:** Village Theatre VII. . . . **THE TIE THAT BINDS:** Embassy. . . . **UNZIPPED:** Village Theatre VII, Murray Hill Cinemas, Tower East, and 84th Street Sixplex. . . . **A WALK IN THE CLOUDS:** Angelika Film Center and Beekman. . . . **WINGS OF COURAGE** (4/24/95): Lincoln Square.

THEATRE ADDRESSES

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EAST SIDE

Angelika Film Center, 18 W. Houston St.
Movieland 8th Street Triplex, 36 E. 8th St.
Village Theatre VII, 3rd Ave. at 11th St.
Cinema Village, 22 E. 12th St.
Village East Cinemas, 2nd Ave. at 12th St.
19th Street East 6, B'way at 19th St.
Murray Hill Cinemas, 160 E. 34th St.
34th Street Showplace, 238 E. 34th St.
34th St. East, 241 E. 34th St.
Eastside Playhouse, 3rd Ave. at 55th St.
Sutton I and 2, 3rd Ave. at 57th St.
Gotham Cinema, 3rd Ave. at 58th St.
Plaza, 42 E. 58th St.
Manhattan Twin, 3rd Ave. at 59th St.
59th Street East Cinema, 239 E. 59th St.
Baronet and Coronet, 3rd Ave. at 59th St.
Cinema I, Cinema II, and Cinema 3rd Avenue, 3rd Ave. at 60th St.
First & 62nd Cinemas, 400 E. 62nd St.
Gemini I and 2, 2nd Ave. at 64th St.
Beekman, 2nd Ave. at 66th St.
New York Twin, 2nd Ave. at 67th St.
68th St. Playhouse, 3rd Ave. at 68th St.
Tower East, 3rd Ave. at 71st St.
East 85th Street, 1st Ave. at 85th St.
Park & 86th Street Cinemas, 125 E. 86th St.
Orpheum VII, 3rd Ave. at 86th St.
86th Street East Twin, 3rd Ave. at 86th St.

WEST SIDE

Film Forum, 209 W. Houston St.
Waverly I and 2, 6th Ave. at 3rd St.
Art Greenwich Twin, Greenwich Ave. at 12th St.
Quad Cinema, 34 W. 13th St.
Chelsea Cinemas, 260 W. 23rd St.
23rd St. West Triplex, 333 W. 23rd St.
Guild, 33 W. 50th St.
Worldwide Cinemas, 50th St. between 8th and 9th Aves.
Ziegfeld, 141 W. 54th St.
Carnegie Hall Cinemas, 7th Ave. between 56th and 57th Sts.
Angelika 57, 225 W. 57th St.
Paris, 4 W. 58th St.
Cinema 3, 2 W. 59th St.
62nd & Broadway, 62 W. 62nd St.
Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, B'way at 63rd St.
Regency, B'way at 67th St.
Lincoln Square, B'way at 68th St.
84th Street Sixplex, B'way at 84th St.
Metro Cinema I and 2, B'way at 99th St.
Olympia I and II, B'way at 107th St.

TIMES SQUARE AREA

Criterion Center, B'way at 44th St.
Embassy 1, B'way at 46th St.
Embassy 2, 3, and 4, 7th Ave. at 47th St.
Astor Plaza, 44th St. at B'way.
National Twin, B'way at 44th St.

REVIVALS

(The following notes are by Pauline Kael, Terrence Rafferty, and Michael Sragow. Theatre addresses and phone numbers appear with the listings following these notes.)

THE AMAZING DR. CLITTERHOUSE (1938)—A high-society physician (Edward G. Robinson) studies crime by practicing it—and falls in love with his night job. His colleagues include a beautiful fence (Claire Trevor) and a feral safecracker (Humphrey Bogart). This comedy-tinged melodrama is like a shotgun marriage of Damon Runyon and Bernard Shaw: the farce is guttural-quaint, the irony blaring. But the filmmakers give it a slick finish and the stars make it snappy. A surprisingly dapper Robinson has a good time using the doctor's highbrowisms to dominate the hoodlums, and Bogart—a one-man rock-and-hard-place—is perfect at putting the squeeze on him. Anatole Litvak directed John Wexley and John Huston's adaptation of Barré Lyndon's play; a decade later, Robinson, Trevor, and Bogart would team up with Huston for "Key Largo."—M.S. (Museum of Modern Art; Oct. 1.)

THE HEIRESS (1949)—This William Wyler production is very likely the best film adaptation of Henry James, with the possible exception of "The Innocents." The screenplay, by Ruth and Augustus Goetz, is based on their stage version of James's "Washington Square," and at first the period settings and clothes may make the movie seem a little heavy and stagy, but then Wyler's mastery of the psychological nuances can have you drawing deep breaths. Montgomery Clift is just about perfect as James's fortune hunter Morris Townsend, and Olivia de Havilland does her finest work ever as the heiress Catherine Sloper. With Ralph Richardson and Miriam Hopkins.—P.K. (Museum of Modern Art; Sept. 28 and 30.)

JUNGLE FEVER (1991)—The central event in Spike Lee's movie is the love affair of Flipper (Wesley Snipes), a married African-American architect from Harlem, and Angie (Annabella Sciorra), an Italian-American office temp from Bensonhurst. Once Lee has set up the interracial relationship, he seems to lose interest in it; Flipper and Angie hold the stage only long enough to ignite the fears and hatreds of their communities. And Lee's attitude toward interracial sex is shockingly puritanical—it's as if he were afraid that any hint of eroticism would constitute an endorsement of Flipper and Angie's affair. The scenes that deal with Flipper's crackhead brother, Gator (Samuel L. Jackson), have more energy than anything else in the picture; this subplot is tangential to the central theme, but it has some shape and dramatic coherence, and it actually builds to a climax. Also with Lonette McKee, John Turturro, Anthony Quinn, Ossie Davis, Ruby Dee, and Frank Vincent. The inventive cinematography is by Ernest Dickerson.—T.R. (American Museum of the Moving Image; Oct. 1.)

KING LEAR (1971)—Gorgeous, lucid, essential. Working from Boris Pasternak's translation, Grigori Kozintsev puts his own political stamp on Shakespeare. This Lear (Yuri Yarvet) plays foolhardy games with his succession because he has allowed the rhetoric and trappings of power to crowd out his feeling for his family and his state; he dashes from one daughter to another as if on royal safari, with hounds and falcons and a chaotic cadre of knights. Kozintsev employs disintegrating Estonian landscapes and a threnody-like Shostakovich score to evoke a medieval balefulness. He also stirs up Christian undercurrents: the audience experiences Lear's fall, his acceptance of his and his people's common lot, and his too-late rapprochement with Cordelia as a religious redemption. In Russian.—M.S. (Walter Reade Theatre; Sept. 30.)

THE NANNY (1965)—A small-scale English thriller, directed by Seth Holt—deft enough to be tantalizingly suggestive of what it might have been. The characters are amusingly "modern": the children are "cool," the father insufferable, the mother weak, the aunt self-centered. So far, so good. The exception is Bette Davis, trying to give a restrained performance as the dowdy, repressed nanny, whose ten-year-old charge suspects her of having killed his little sister. Restraint is what Davis has not got much of. You have to hand it to her, though: she *is* a star. When she can't dominate by a good performance, she dominates by a bad one.—P.K. (Film Forum 2; Sept. 28.)

At Film Forum 2, Eric Fleming and Zsa Zsa Gabor in "Queen of Outer Space."

WALTER MINUS

WATCH ON THE RHINE (1943)—Lillian Hellman's 1941 Broadway play—a cautionary polemical melodrama about the danger of Fascism in the United States—is housebound and fearfully lofty. Paul Lukas is the European Underground leader who brings his American wife (Bette Davis, subdued and unexciting) and three children home to the Washington mansion of her mother (Lucile Watson). The film has some inadvertent humor: the children of this liberal couple are the most highly disciplined little prigs imaginable. With George Coulouris as a suave, vile Fascist, Geraldine Fitzgerald, Donald Woods, Henry Daniell, and Beulah Bondi. Directed by Herman Shumlin.—P.K. (Museum of Modern Art; Oct. 1 and 3.)

LATE RUNS, CLASSICS, ETC.

(Titles with a dagger are reviewed above.)

NEW YORK FILM FESTIVAL—The first programs in a seventeen-day series of international films—**AVERY FISHER HALL:** Sept. 29 at 9: "Shanghai Triad" (Zhang Yimou, China/France).... **ALICE TULLY HALL:** Sept. 29 at 8: "Shanghai Triad."... Sept. 30 at 12:30 and Oct. 1 at 7:15: "The White Balloon" (Jafar Panahi, Iran).... Sept. 30 at 3:30: "Discovering Max Linder" (France).... Sept. 30 at 6 and Oct. 1 at 9:45: "Georgia" (Ulu Grosbard, France/United States).... Sept. 30 at 9 and Oct. 1 at 1:30: "Dead Presidents" (Albert and Allen Hughes, United States).... Oct. 1 at 4:30: "Flamenco" (Carlos Saura, Spain).... Oct. 2 at 6 and Oct. 3 at 9: "Sixteen Oh Sixty" (Vinicius Mainardi, Brazil).... Oct. 2 at 9 and Oct. 3 at 6: "The Neon Bible" (Terence Davies, United Kingdom). (For tickets, call 875-5050.)

FILM FORUM 2, 209 W. Houston St. (727-8110)—Sept. 27: "The Killing Kind" (1973, Curtis Harrington) and "The Big Cube" (1969, Tito Davison).... Sept. 28: "The Nanny" (†) and "The Anniversary" (1968, Roy Ward Baker).... From Sept. 29: "Queen of Outer Space" (1958, Edward Bernds), with Zsa Zsa Gabor and Eric Fleming.

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART, Roy and Niuta Titus Theatres, 11 W. 53rd St. (708-9480)—A series of films made from Broadway plays. Sept. 28 at 2:30 and Sept. 29 at 8: "Sabrina" (1954, Billy Wilder).... Sept. 28 at 6 and Sept. 29 at 6: "Rebound" (1931, Edward H. Griffith).... Sept. 28 at 8 and Sept. 30 at 5: "The Heiress" (†).... Sept. 29 at 2:30 and Sept. 30 at 3:15: "The Green Goddess" (1930, Alfred E. Green).... Sept. 30 at 12:45: "A Raisin in the Sun" (1961, Donald Petrie).... Oct. 1 at 1: "The Girl of the Golden West" (1930, John Francis Dillon).... Oct. 1 at 3: "The Amazing Dr. Clitterhouse" (†).... Oct. 1 at 5 and Oct. 3 at 2:30: "Watch on the Rhine" (†).... Oct. 2 at 2:30 and Oct. 3 at 6: "The Affairs of Anatol" (1921, Cecil B. De Mille; silent).... Oct. 2 at 6: "Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?" (1966, Mike Nichols).... ¶ Sept. 28 at 3 and 6; Sept. 29 at 3, 6, and 8:15; and Sept. 30 at 2:30 and 5: A series of short and medium-length films made between 1911 and 1919 in Wilhelmine, Germany. All are silent, with German intertitles; English synopses will be provided.

WALTER READE THEATRE, Lincoln Center, 165 W. 65th St., plaza level (875-5600)—A program of films from Argentina; all the films are in Spanish, with English subtitles. Sept. 28 at 6: "Camila" (1984, Maria Luisa Bemberg).... Sept. 28 at 8: "I, the Worst of All" (1990, Bemberg).... Sept. 29 at 6:30 and 8:15: "Hand in the Trap" (1961, Leopoldo Torre Nilsson).... ¶ A series of films by the Soviet director Grigori Kozintsev. Sept. 30 at 2 and 7:30: "Hamlet" (1965).... Sept. 30 at 4:45: "King Lear" (†).... Oct. 1 at 2 and 6:30: "The Overcoat" (1926).... Oct. 1 at 4:30 and Oct. 3 at 2 and 6:30: "Alone" (1931).... Oct. 1 at 8:45: "Don Quixote" (1957).... Oct. 2 at 2 and Oct. 3 at 4 and 8:15: "The Youth of Maxim" (1935).... Oct. 2 at 8: "The New Babylon" (1929).

MUSEUM OF TELEVISION AND RADIO, 25 W. 52nd St. (621-6800)—James Dean's television appearances. Through Oct. 22: "A Long Time Till Dawn" (1953).

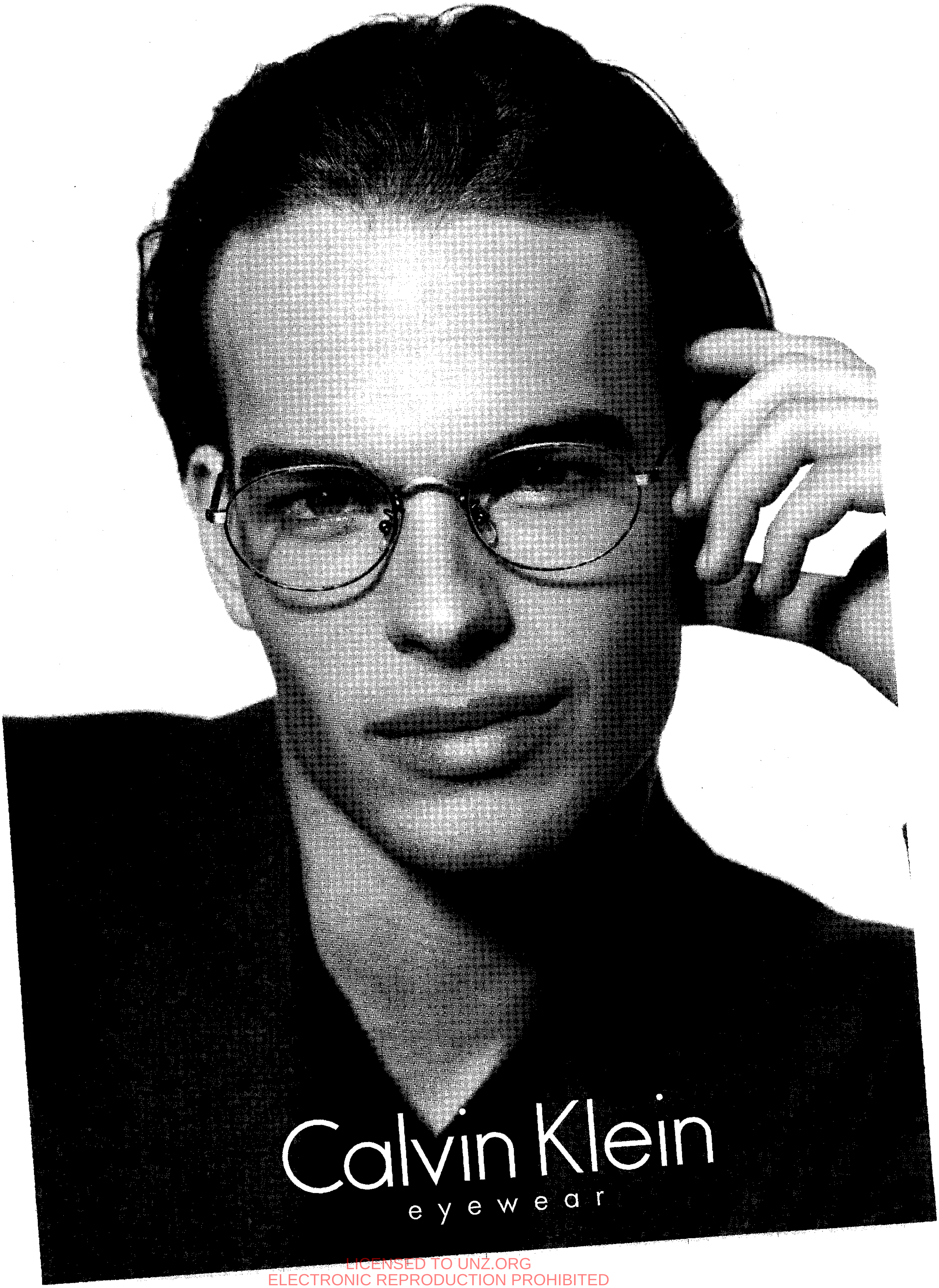
AMERICAN MUSEUM OF THE MOVING IMAGE, 35th Ave. at 36th St., Astoria (1-718 784-0077)—Films directed by Spike Lee. Sept. 30 at 2: "Malcolm X" (1992).... Oct. 1 at 2: "Jungle Fever" (†).... Oct. 1 at 5: An hour-long program of music videos and commercials directed by Lee.

A DIFFERENT LIGHT BOOKSTORE, 151 W. 19th St. (989-4850)—A Sunday-night series of free films (and popcorn). On Oct. 1 at 7, the feature will be "Die! Die! My Darling!" (1965, Silvio Narizzano).

ANTHOLOGY FILM ARCHIVES, 32 Second Ave., at 2nd St. (505-5181)—Sept. 27 at 8 and Sept. 28 at 10: "Lyrical Nitrate" (1991, Peter Delpeut) and short films by Louis Lumière.... Sept. 27 at 10, Sept. 28 at 8, Sept. 29 at 10, and Sept. 30 at 9: "The Blue Villa" (1995, Alain Robbe-Grillet and Dimitri de Clercq; in French).... Sept. 28 at 9: "Numero Deux" (1975, Jean-Luc Godard; in French).... Sept. 29 at 9 and Sept. 30 at 6 and 8: Three programs from the Third ICA Biennial of Independent Film and Video.

SYMPHONY SPACE, B'way at 95th St. (864-5400)—Oct. 3 at 7: "All About Eve" (1950, Joseph L. Mankiewicz).... Oct. 3 at 9:30: "The Marriage of Maria Braun" (1979, Rainer Werner Fassbinder; in German).

FLORENCE GOULD HALL, 55 E. 59th St. (355-6160)—Oct. 3 at 12:30 and 6: "The Sign of Leo" (1959, Eric Rohmer; in French).... Oct. 3 at 3:15 and 8:45: "La Boulangère de Monceau" (1962, Rohmer; in French) and "La Carrière de Suzanne" (1963, Rohmer; in French).


Calvin Klein
eyewear

THE NEW YORKER

THE TALK OF THE TOWN

ALBRIGHT THROWS THE BOOK AT POWELL

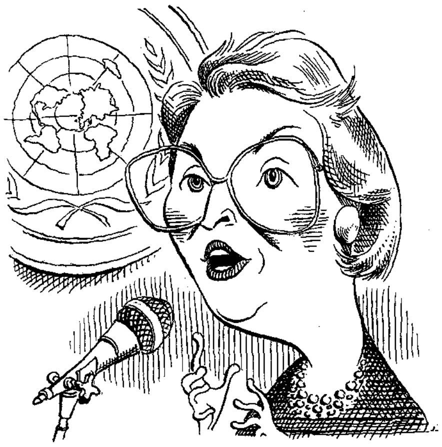
MADELEINE ALBRIGHT, the Clinton Administration's Ambassador to the United Nations, may have the most wearying job in all diplomacy. Unlike a run-of-the-mill ambassador, she cannot limit her circumlocutions to a single country. She must watch her words before the entire family of man, from Afghanistan to Zimbabwe. On the subject of Colin Powell, however, Albright seems to speak through pursed lips these days. She is, in a word, furious with the general-on-book-tour.

In his memoir, "My American Journey," Powell recounts a debate with Albright over Bosnia policy in the early days of the Clinton Administration, when he was still chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. "What's the point of having this superb military that you're always talking about if we can't use it?" Powell quotes Albright as saying. "I thought I would have an aneurysm," Powell continues. "American GIs were not toy soldiers to be moved around on some sort of global game board."

Powell, who opposed the use of air power in Bosnia, left the Administration in 1993 and now recalls the Clinton foreign-policy-making machine as resembling "graduate-student bull sessions."

"It's all a little patronizing," Albright said the other day. "As it turns out, Colin Powell is a little wrong about Bosnia. In some ways, it's an unfair time for his book to come out, saying that air power can't work in Bosnia." In fact, air power, combined with the success of the Croatian military offensive, divisions in the Bosnian Serb leadership, and the world's horror at the attacks on Sarajevo and Srebrenica, helped force the march to negotiating tables in Belgrade and Geneva. Albright said that while it may not yet be time to "break out the champagne," the Administration's decision to use force in the Balkans clearly helped bring about the first period of genuine optimism in years.

"The fact is, Colin Powell has a different approach to the use of power," Albright said. "I mean, of course you can use power when the earth is flat and you have six months to prepare and you're facing a crazy dictator with nuclear weapons and someone else is paying for it. But that is not always the situation."



Ambassador Madeleine Albright

Powell writes that he turned down Clinton's entreaties to him to become Secretary of State, and Albright, for her part, seems relieved. "I think it would have been a tough fit," she said. Other sources say that Powell, as a high-profile general fresh from his success in the Iraq war, was an intimidating presence for advisers who were painfully aware that their President had slipped the draft and suffered for it in opinion polls.

Of all President Clinton's foreign-policy advisers, Albright has been the one pressing him hardest to use force in the region. In the midst of a policy review in early August, Albright told the President that the Bosnia quagmire was in danger of overshadowing any achievements of the Administration and putting the country's leadership of the post-Cold War order at grave risk. The United States, she said, could no longer afford a policy of following the lead of Britain and France. Ironically, Albright found herself at odds with a close friend, Secretary of State Warren Christopher, who had proved far more reluctant to seize the initiative in the Balkans.

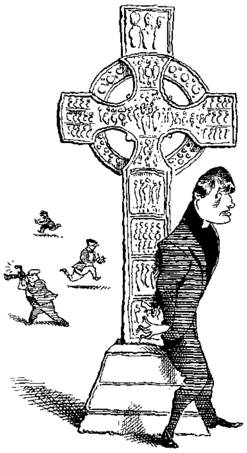
"People seem to look at the former Yugoslavia in one of two ways—as Munich or as Vietnam—though neither is quite right," Albright said. "But I was closer to the Munich model, and others were closer to the Vietnam model. That frustrated me."

The other night, Albright threw a party at her residence at the Waldorf Towers for Assistant Secretary of State Richard Holbrooke and his wife, the journalist Kati Marton. Holbrooke is the voluble statesman who has been leading the Balkan negotiations and, in the process, winning a stack of glowing press clippings. In her toast to Holbrooke, Albright said that the two of them were "joined at the hip" on Bosnia. And yet, when there was talk in the dining room about a Secretary of State in a second Clinton Administration, the name overheard was Albright's. As he forms his own shadow cabinet-in-waiting, Colin Powell must come up with other names.

ILLUSTRATIONS BY MICHAEL WITTE

A KENNEDY AND HIS FLOCK

As the power of the Catholic Church wanes in Ireland, the actions of the clergy and the hierarchy become more and more bizarre. Take the case of Father Michael Kennedy, a curate in the small, sedate Irish town of Dungarvan, in County Waterford. Before his ordination, Father Kennedy was a Sinn Fein councillor in a midlands town. He is strong and good-looking and ready to speak out on controversial subjects. He is also a distant cousin of the American Kennedy clan, and in recent years he has become one of their favorite priests. He officiated at two recent Kennedy weddings: that of Courtney Kennedy, a daughter of Robert F. Kennedy, to Paul Hill, of Belfast, who was one of the Guildford Four; and that of Kym Kennedy Smith, a daughter of Jean Kennedy Smith, the American Ambassador to Ireland, to a Dublin bar manager. Father Kennedy sat with Ethel Kennedy and other family members at Paul Hill's trial, in Belfast, and took part in Rose Kennedy's funeral. In rural Ireland, hobnobbing with the Kennedys is one way of making people sit up and listen.

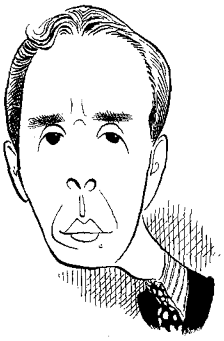

Father Kennedy

On a recent Sunday, Kennedy had delivered a bombshell sermon to his congregation. He told them that a woman with AIDS had arrived in Dungarvan and slept with at least eighty local men. Five of them were supposedly now H.I.V.-positive, and others were about to be tested. Kennedy said that the woman herself—she was later dubbed the Angel of Death and the AIDS Avenger—had told him she had infected the men out of anger and a need for revenge, and now she was dying in London. It was a warning to men everywhere.

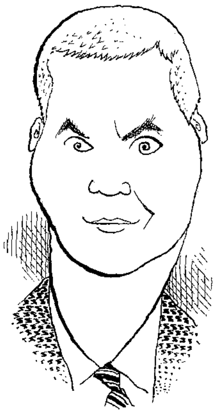
"Mick is a decent man," a friend of his told the Sunday *Independent*, "but he can be extraordinarily naïve." By Tuesday, a circus of tabloid journalists had arrived in Dungarvan—population seven thousand—seeking the woman's name and interviews with her victims. When they failed to get what they wanted, they started to question the priest about his allegations. Then the real problems started. Kennedy, interviewed on television, looked like a cross between R.F.K. and an old-time Irish priest tending his flock with worry and care. But he simply wasn't good on the details—what questions he had asked the victims, where the encounters had happened—and as the week went by he changed his story day by day. Then, on TV, a woman claimed that she had been infected by one of the men infected by the Angel of Death. But it turned out that she was a manic-depressive and had never been anywhere near Dungarvan in her life.

The journalists moved around the town taking photographs and interviewing old men about their views on safe sex, but finding nothing. An AIDS advice group moved into the main town square and was studiously ignored. The people of Dungarvan desperately wanted the journalists to go away; they realized that Kennedy had unwittingly damaged the marriage prospects of all their sons. They swore that they knew nothing of the AIDS Avenger, and no one could find a trace of her or of anyone she'd infected. Father Kennedy had switched off his mobile phone and was not talking to reporters. The next Sunday, the sermon at Mass in Dungarvan was delivered by a Dominican nun.

OF DEALERS AND PLAYERS


Arne Glimcher

Arne Glimcher and Larry Gagosian, who may be Manhattan's most talked-about—and competitive—art dealers, are both poised to open galleries, four blocks apart, in Beverly Hills but are otherwise as different as chalk from cheese. Glimcher, a tall, urbane figure with a caressing voice, tends to look dressed for either the country or a good racquet club. His gallery, Pace Wildenstein, has famously deep pockets, but if one brings up the subject of money when Glimcher is talking art he can sound as regretful as a papal nuncio forced to discuss teen sex. Gagosian, who wears Comme des Garçons suits and has a pelt of hair the same dull silver as a rubbed quarter, has an uncanny eye for art but is surrounded by a shimmer of rumors of financial brinkmanship. The Los Angeles branch of Pace Wildenstein, which was designed by Charles Gwathmey, is on Wilshire Boulevard and opens on September 29th. The new Gagosian gallery, designed by Richard Meier, is on North Camden Drive and is to open on October 18th.


Larry Gagosian

This is not quite Act I for L.A. Art, though. "I remember how everybody was talking about how Los Angeles was going to take over from New York," says the painter Ross Bleckner, speaking of his student days at the California Institute of the Arts in the early seventies. Actually, Bleckner's hot-shot generation moved to New York more or less en masse, and the predictions proved false.

Then, in the winter of 1986, Southern California's Museum of Contemporary Art and the Los Angeles County Museum of Art opened major buildings within a couple of weeks of each other. The refulgent press attention included "Artful L.A.," a cover story in the *Times Magazine*. In a twinkling, a score of contemporary-art galleries opened for business, but that boom never occurred, either. Museum attendance has been lagging and gallery sales likewise. "If a collector in Los Angeles is going to pay more for a piece of art than for a BMW, he is going to buy it in New York," the dealer Irving Blum said after closing down the L.A. branch of the Blum Helman gallery in 1991.

Glimcher and Gagosian, however, feel that times have changed. Neither arrival on the West Coast was unexpected, but the coming of both is being taken to signal a shift in the art world's tectonic plates. Moreover, neither man is new to L.A. Glimcher has directed a couple of movies, and his Hollywood mentor, Michael Ovitz, is a committed collector who buys a lot from Pace Wildenstein. Gagosian was born in Los Angeles and had a series of galleries there before moving to New York in 1986. One of his major collectors is David Geffen. No love is lost between Ovitz and Geffen, and, rivalry and emulation being what they are in Los Angeles, some have seen the Coming L.A. Art Boom as a media war continued by other means. But it is subtler than that.

In the past, New York dealers would seldom send their better goods to California, and California collectors were very aware of this. "But if they're offered really exciting shows and they're convinced they're not being given leftovers, I see no reason that they wouldn't respond," says Gagosian, who is opening with sculptures by Frank Stella. Glimcher agrees, and adds, "I'm showing Chuck Close. Chuck hasn't shown in New York for two years."

Also important is the recent mushrooming of fortunes in the entertainment and technology industries that call the West Coast home, and the buying patterns among the new collectors. "The older generation of collectors liked going to New York," a longtime L.A. dealer says. "Doug Cramer loves schmoozing with Mary Boone. But these agents and producers and Silicon Valley guys hate all that. They are just too busy. Arne and Gogo should make out fine."

TO LIVE AND DIE IN L.A.

Dr. Timothy Leary has informed family, friends, and the press that he has been diagnosed with terminal prostate cancer. Now the customary Sunday-afternoon gathering at Leary's Beverly Hills home has become an Irish wake, with the man himself presiding.

One recent Sunday, Leary, who is seventy-four, was watching the Patriots-49ers game with great gusto as guests began filing in. Someone asked Leary if he was a Patriots fan, thinking that perhaps he had developed an allegiance to New England back when he was a professor at Harvard. "I'm a Giants fan," Leary said with a wink. "Want a beer?"

Leary, pale and thin, escorted a few people to the fridge, got a couple of cold ones, and then poured himself and his guests shots of tequila for good measure. He went back to catch the third quarter while more guests arrived. There was a rumor that Ken Kesey was in town and might drop by.

A woman named Kathleen Cairns sat at the dining-room table poking at her PowerBook. She is a psychologist and was working on a book about how to prepare for your own funeral. When she called Leary out of the blue to see if he would write the foreword, he invited her over. "I didn't know anybody else was going to be here," she confided. "I thought we were going to have a one-on-one about death and his attitude toward it."

Leary joined in. He had his glass of tequila in hand, and he lit up a cigarette. "So, what do you want me to say in this thing?" he asked.

"Well, how are you feeling about the event itself?" Cairns asked. "You know . . . death . . . the white light and all that?"

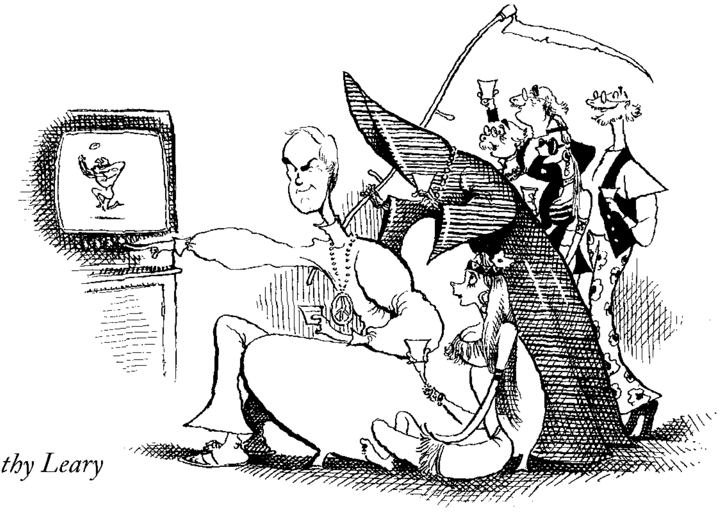
Leary looked pensive. "White light, white light," he mulled. "I think I've paid my electric bills." He winked and leaped up to greet more guests.

Eventually, everyone collected around a plate of cheese, crackers, and salami on a picnic table outside on the lawn, overlooking the canyons. Suddenly Kesey burst in, along with his Merry Prankster pal Ken Babbs. The duo were fresh from a reading of their new book, "Last Go Round," at the L.A. Public Library.

It was Kesey's birthday, and someone brought out a chocolate cake with swirly colored frosting, like something from an old Haight-Ashbury poster. A bottle of vintage port was uncorked and passed around. Kesey offered a toast to those he called "my great mentors": Neal Cassady, Allen Ginsberg, Jerry Garcia—and Leary. "We were all ringside while you made history," Kesey said, looking fondly at Leary.

Kesey offered a second toast, this time to the C.I.A., before chowing down his cake and gulping his port. Then he got up to go. He and Babbs, both big, barrel-chested men, embraced the frail Leary. From the doorway, Kesey hollered back, "Remember, the sixties ain't over until the fat lady gets high!"

Leary smiled and winked.



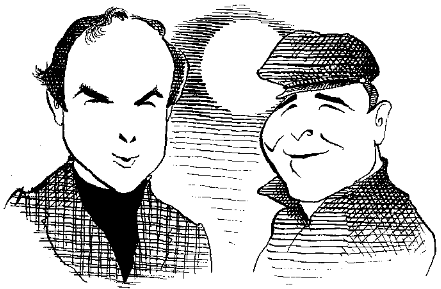
Timothy Leary

MOONLIGHTING ON BROADWAY

The British film director Karel Reisz recently went to inspect the Roundabout Theatre, where he will make his Broadway début on October 17th with Harold Pinter's "Moonlight," the playwright's first full-length play in over a decade, and discovered that he wasn't the first in his family to play there. Reisz's wife, Betsy—whose stage name is Betsy Blair, and who was nominated in 1955 for an Academy Award for "Marty"—realized, with one look at the long, winding staircase that leads to the Roundabout's main stage, that some fifty years earlier, at the age of fifteen, she, too, had made her Broadway début there, replacing Nora Kaye in the chorus of what was then the International Casino.

At sixty-nine, Reisz—who has a bald head and cheekbones as plump as the Czech dumplings he loved as a child growing up in the industrial town of Ostrava—has taken his time getting to Broadway and into the theatre. By his count, he has directed only five plays, and he confesses to "a horror of pontificating about theatre." But he has been one of the seminal forces in English cinema. He is an actor's director whose intellectual rigor and quiet daring have called out of the stars with whom he's worked some of their finest performances: Albert Finney in "Saturday Night and Sunday Morning"; James Caan in "The Gambler"; Nick Nolte in "Who'll Stop the Rain?"; Meryl Streep in "The French Lieutenant's Woman"; Jessica Lange in "Sweet Dreams."

Reisz's flirtation with theatre began in the early eighties, when he directed John Guare's "Gardenia" at the Manhattan Theatre Club, and it has been rekindled in recent years by his association with the Almeida Theatre, in London, where he directed Tom Murphy's "The Gigli Concert" and Sir Terence Rattigan's "The Deep Blue Sea." "Movies have become so heavy," Reisz says. "They take two years of your life. A play you do in one five-week wave of energy, and then it's completed. It's just you and it; there is no machine, no producers, no big budget."



Karel Reisz and Harold Pinter

Reisz first collaborated with Pinter on "The French Lieutenant's Woman." What began as a working acquaintance has flowered into a friendship that includes regular bridge nights. They make an odd couple: Pinter is a very visible London social personage, bustling through the world in stentorian fashion; Reisz is a sedate homebody who likes nothing better than to putter around his long, walled Hampstead garden.

"Moonlight," with its overlapping emotional intensities, fits Reisz's own subtle visual imagination. "This play is very different from Pinter's other plays," says Reisz, who first directed "Moonlight" last year at the Gate Theatre in Dublin, and whose cast includes Jason Robards and Blythe Danner. "There's a premise at the beginning: a man is dying and his sons won't come to his deathbed. But thereafter the play veers off into the parallel action of the principal characters and minor figures. It is completely nonlinear. There is a strong and lucid emotional thread but no time links. The themes of the play are, I suppose, death and family, but, of course, this is a Pinter play, so there's a lot of, shall we say, robust humor—a lot of piss and vinegar."

As an adapter for film, Pinter is scrupulous about serving the author's original vision, but with his plays, according to Reisz, "Pinter talks as though they were something outside himself. He looks at what you show him and tells you how it works for him. The point is he welcomes the process, and he doesn't want you to be in awe of the text. But he *is* jealous of the laughs. You better try and get *them* right. There's a story about Harold that theatre people tell in different variations, about the actor who asked him, 'When I say this line, what do you mean me to feel?,' and got 'Mind your own business' as an answer. It's probably apocryphal, but something about it rings true. He is, after all, an actor, and he welcomes the individuality of the actor's contribution. He doesn't tell you more than is on the page, and even on the page there's no 'lightly' or 'fiercely' in parentheses after the lines. The suggestions are all about tempi. The rhythms *do* matter. If you can get *them* right, you're halfway there." Reisz insists that doing a Pinter play isn't so much a matter of interior exploration. "When the thing sings, it sings," he says. "And then you'd best not go into it too deeply."

MEDICINE WOMEN

You would not necessarily expect nurses' aides to be discussing plant remedies next to a table of prescription medication for the cancer patient they are caring for. But the climate has changed when it comes to healing agents. Andrew Weil's best-seller, "Spontaneous Healing," invokes the curative powers of milk thistle and mushrooms that grow on moth larvae. Sherwin Nuland ("How We Die") has announced the return of leeches. And now the Caribbean healing system known as bush medicine, treatment with island vegetation, is gaining adherents here.

Rosalind Nicholls and Madge Reynolds, night-shift caretakers of the very ill in hospitals and homes, look spiffy in their white pants suits. They are used to ambulances and I.V.s and catheters and monitors, and they are used to following doctors' orders. Tonight's crisis is a fever, which usually leads to the emergency room at New York Hospital, right outside the window of the apartment, on East Seventy-second Street. But they are saying that where they come from the treatment of choice is in the back yard. "That kind of fever if he had we give him fever grass," Nicholls says. "He wouldn't end up in hospital and take all those t'ings. We put it to boil. We make a nice tea, and it smell beautiful. He will drink that tea, and in the night he will be sweatin' and it make him good as gold."

Nicholls is from Trinidad and Reynolds from Jamaica, and they say that bush medicine has a brew for most ailments. "Your parents teach you to see the bush," Reynolds says. "I see that medicine help you in some ways and it hurt you, too. The bush doesn't hurt you. If you check it out, you could get so much t'ings from the plants that you could really use."

They know the plants by sight and also by name. "The baby have a grippe and you give him love bush," Nicholls says. "Or you take sweet-broom leaf and put it on baby's navel under a glass, and if it's limp the baby have colic." For complaints from colds to cramps, there is tree of life and spiritweed and Circe and physic-nut leaf. Cobwebs with rum and salt for abscesses. Digestive trouble? *Banana-leaf tea for nine mornings.*

"Watercress for heart. People would eat that for crazy," Reynolds says. For insomnia, "you just go down and break a soursop leaf and boil it and drink it. It's better than tranquillizer. If you can't sleep, it's a nerve t'ing. I drink it, and I start sleepin' again."

Then there's the "male" remedy. Nicholls says, "Let me tell you about *bois bandé.* It give you a long erection. One guy was greedy. He had no one to go off with, and it would not go down. He end up in hospital."

They say that bush tea and tonics are appearing in stores here, but Reynolds adds, "At all time, my plane fare is in the bank. If I get sick, put me on a plane and send me home." ♦

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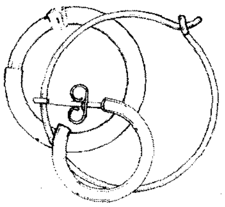

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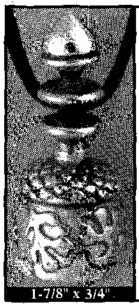

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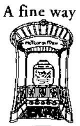

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THE POLITICAL SCENE

GHOST IN THE MACHINE

Richard Nixon is back—not just in Oliver Stone's movie but in a strange link to the G.O.P. candidates who are scrambling to claim his blessing.

BY SIDNEY BLUMENTHAL

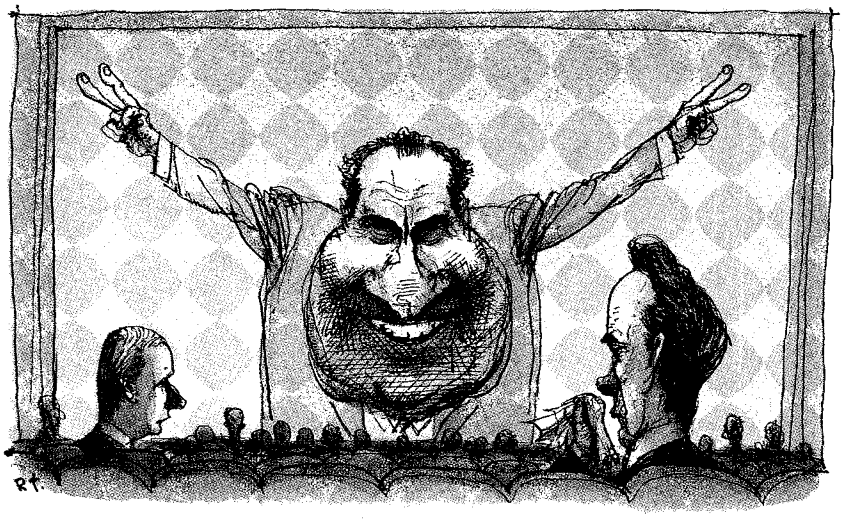
At three in the morning, the Lincoln Memorial is floodlit but deserted. A shadowy man with hunched shoulders slowly begins the long ascent of its marble steps. Halfway up, he stops and turns his head to glance behind him, and resumes his climb. Suddenly, he stops again, faces the Reflecting Pool and the Washington Monument, and awkwardly thrusts his arms upward, giving two victory signs. He walks down the steps and ever so slowly begins climbing again—twice, three times. Finally, he reaches the beatific light at the summit, the light that radiates from within the Memorial, where Lincoln broods.

"Shall we do it again?" asks Anthony Hopkins.

"No, Tony," replies Oliver Stone. "I think that's enough."

Hopkins, his hair combed back from a widow's peak, wearing a business suit with an American-flag lapel pin and a tie held by a clasp adorned with the seal of the President of the United States, takes a wooden-and-cloth folding chair. On its back is stencilled "NIXON."

It is a sweltering July night, and mists of humidity lazily swirl over the Potomac. For the moment, though, it is May 9, 1970, just days after the invasion of Cambodia and the killing of four students at Kent State. Hundreds of thousands of protesters are descending on Washington, and the beleaguered President, accompanied by Manolo Sanchez, his trusted valet, has ventured out of the White House to the Lincoln Memorial, where he will come across a small group of the scruffy youths who are camping out there, and famously engage them in conversation about peace, football, and surfing. The script describes Nixon here very simply: "An apparition."



Pete Wilson and Bob Dole: rival mourners, rival heirs.

RICHARD THOMPSON

Oliver Stone's "Nixon," a character portrait in his gallery of Vietnam-era movies, will be released in December, to coincide with the onset of the gathering Presidential campaign. The extravagant public ceremony of Nixon's funeral convinced Hollywood that he was not yesterday's man, and there were many bids on Stone's project. Nixon's death offered Stone an object lesson in the fluidity of history: the disgraced exile almost universally acclaimed as the farseeing statesman. "In America, history is up for grabs," Stone said, sensing an opening. "Nixon" will be the most commercial effort yet at Nixoniana.

Stone seems intent on avoiding the

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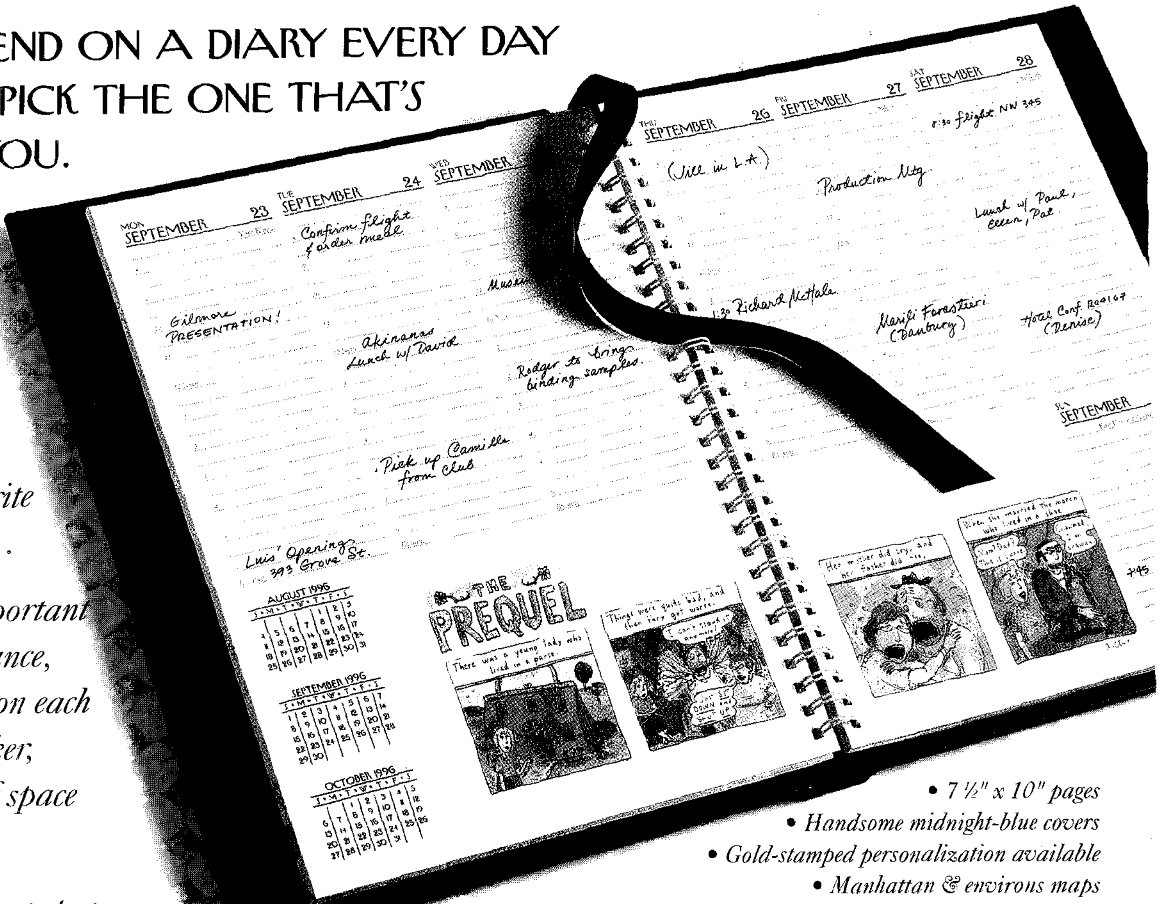
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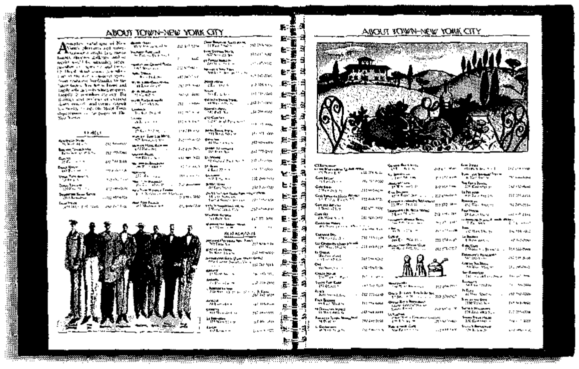
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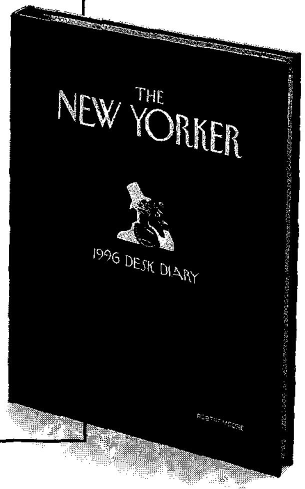
THE NEW YORKER
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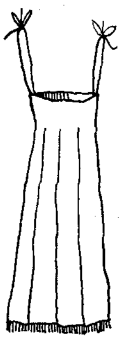
sort of controversy he created with "JFK." (The script for "Nixon" looks as though it had mutated somehow into a term paper. On almost every page there are footnotes, many giving elaborate citations of source material.) But Stone, being Stone, has made a movie that is hardly bland. It is filled with lurid conspiracies, most of which, unlike those in "JFK," do not have to be surmised. Nixon's darkness is one of Stone's themes, yet the film attempts at the same time to evoke sympathy for him. "I find him a sad, lonely man," Anthony Hopkins told me. "Fear of being intimate with people—I latched on to that. Once I had done that, it was easy." Stone's ultimate allegation is not just that Nixon was involved in a "tangled web to deceive"; it is that he was a man of tragic dimensions, capable of inspiring pity.

At no time since Watergate has the idea of Nixon been more potent. The Republican Presidential candidates, hoping to replicate both his political successes and his method, have gone to inordinate lengths to make their bloodlines known. Most of the contenders had a formative link to Nixon: Lamar Alexander, the former Secretary of Education, who casts himself as the pluperfect political outsider, worked as a lowly aide in the Nixon White House. Patrick Buchanan, who refers to Nixon as "the Old Man," got his start as a Nixon speechwriter, who could be relied upon to produce right-wing attack lines at appropriate intervals. Senator Richard Lugar, when he was the mayor of Indianapolis, prided himself on being called Nixon's "favorite mayor." Senator Arlen Specter, a district attorney in Philadelphia, rode the law-and-order theme that Nixon promoted; Nixon incessantly associated himself with toughness, and the Republican prosecutor became a Nixon pet.



But, of all the Nixon pretenders, those whom Nixon favored most were Pete Wilson and Bob Dole. Wilson, a recent graduate of the law school at Berkeley, had already determined on a political career when Nixon hired him as an advance man in his ill-fated 1962 California gubernatorial campaign. According to Herb Klein, Nixon's longtime press spokesman, after the calamitous "last press conference," where the emotionally roiled loser had proclaimed, "You won't have Nixon to kick around anymore," it fell to Wilson "to stand by the car and make sure Nixon got in." Aware of Nixon's unique political experience, Wilson assiduously cultivated him, seeking his counsel four years later about running for the State Assembly. In 1982, in his race for the U.S. Senate, Wilson defeated former Governor Jerry Brown, the son of Pat Brown, who had humiliated Nixon in 1962. In 1990, Wilson was elected governor of California, thus achieving the one office that had eluded Nixon. Four years later, Wilson defeated Kathleen Brown, Pat Brown's daughter. For that race, Wilson, as always, had consulted Nixon on strategy. By humbling the Brown siblings, Nixon's political son doubly vindicated him. Nixon saw Wilson, at sixty-one, as the generational successor to whom he could pass the torch.

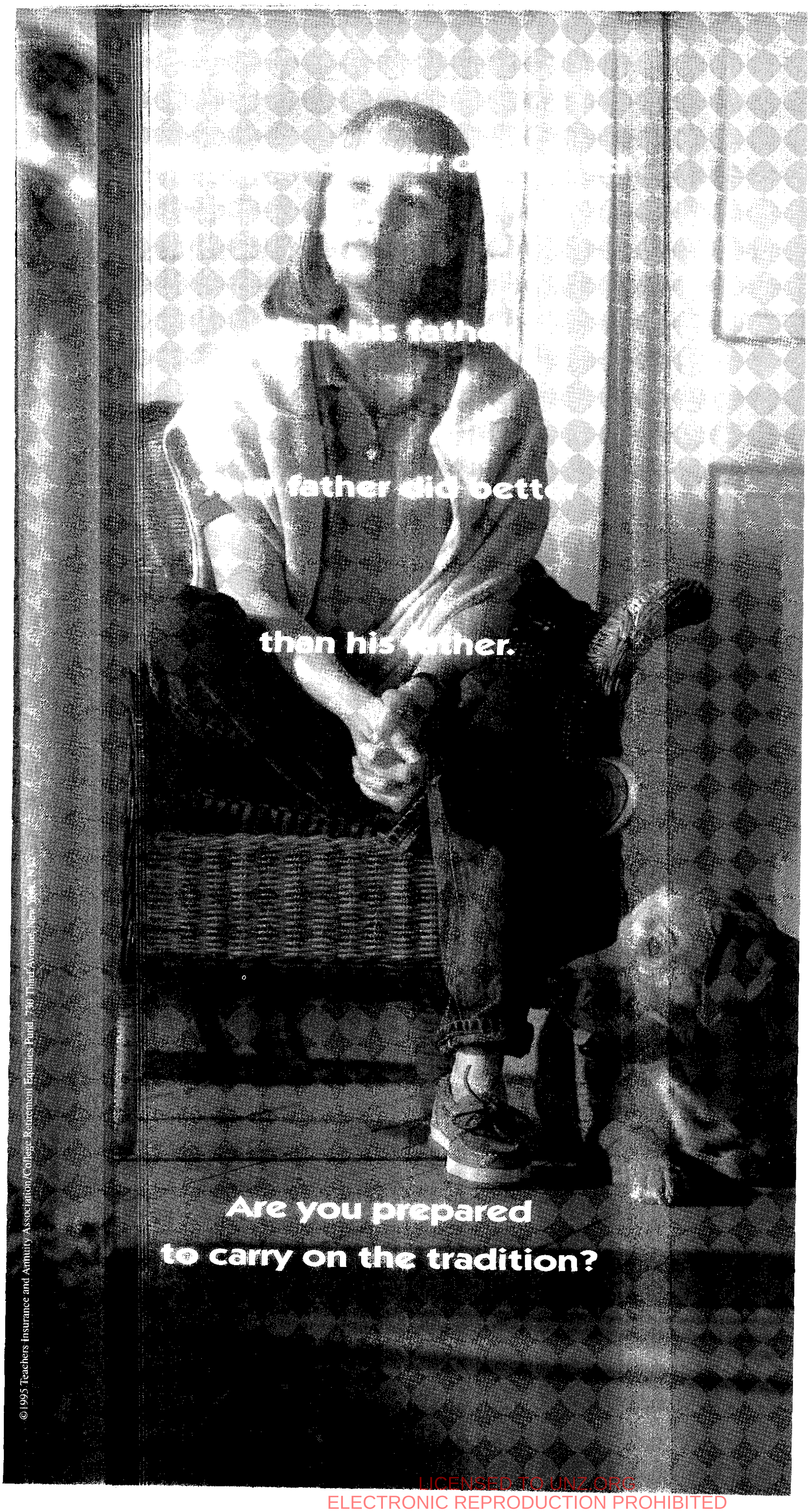
Nixon's greatest feeling, however, was for Dole, a man who was essentially of his own generation, from a similarly modest small-town background, and who shared his fierce partisanship. Their relationship was initially abortive. In 1971, Nixon tapped Senator Dole as the Republican National Committee chairman, only to dump him for George Bush. Dole deeply resented Nixon's firing him, and his resentment had a Nixonian edge: he had earned his position, and Bush was handed it because of his superior class background. But Dole's bitterness toward Nixon eventually faded, and during Nixon's exile Dole paid him court, thereby gaining his great affection. An everlasting partisan, Dole would not abandon his former President. But Bush was a rival, and Dole never forgave him for having been the recipient of Nixon's favoritism. "He started at the top and stayed there. Why should he even be there?" Dole asked me on the eve of the 1988 primary campaign. When Bush beat him, Dole remarked, "There's nothing there."

To the extent that there is a personal element in the competition between Dole and Wilson, it revolves around their claims to the Nixon mantle. At Nixon's funeral, on April 27th of last year, at Yorba Linda, California, on the site of the Nixon Library and in the shadow of the white clapboard house in which Nixon was born, Dole and Wilson were the only elected Republican officials granted the privilege of delivering eulogies. There can be little doubt that they had been chosen beforehand by Nixon himself: he had been drawing up elaborate plans for his funeral—including the music and the program for the service, and his epitaph—since he was first elected President. The acolytes, now rivals, tried to outdo each other in emotional praise for their great helmsman.

Dole mourned "the largest figure of our time, whose influence will be timeless. That was Richard Nixon. How American." He declared that "the second half of the twentieth century will be known as the Age of Nixon." When he finished, he wept uncontrollably. Wilson, for his part, glorified Nixon as having "the quality the greatest fighters have. They call it 'heart.' Heart is what let Richard Nixon climb back into the ring time and again when almost anyone else would have thrown in the towel." Wilson went on to describe his own rise as one of Nixon's anointed. "I turned to him time and again for advice." Nixon had been there as his "counsellor, guide, and friend. . . . It's hard to imagine a world without Richard Nixon."

NIXON'S last campaign, after his disgrace, was to orchestrate both the preservation of his own restored image and the direction of Republican Presidential politics. He assembled a group around him that functioned as a White House manqué: a chief of staff (John Taylor), a speechwriter (Ray Price), a national-security adviser (Dimitri Simes), a congressional liaison (Tom Korologos), and a political director (Roger Stone). "He refused to leave the stage until he was ready, and he wasn't ready until he died," Roger Stone, who was Nixon's closest political confidant in this period, told me. Every trip abroad, every op-ed piece, every book, every dinner was shrewdly thought out for its maximum political effect. "He followed new rules he set for himself: avoiding overexposure, for example." Except for Anwar Sadat's funeral and the opening of Presidential libraries, he avoided joint appearances with the other former Presidents. "Hated that. Just hated it. It just did nothing for him," Stone recalled. "He kept calling it a cattle show. 'I'm not doing anymore of these fucking cattle shows.' "

By 1992, Nixon's last campaign had proved so successful that he was ap-



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TEEN WEATHER

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proached about making an appearance at the Republican National Convention—the first appearance since his renomination twenty years earlier. It would have been the capstone, a public acclamation of his two-decades-long bid for rehabilitation. "He really wanted to go," Roger Stone said, "because, one, he knew it'd be his last Convention, and, two, he knew that he would've got a tumultuous welcome. . . . But he was very troubled by the lack of something to say. He said there were really only two options: 'If I go there and extoll George Bush as the greatest President we ever had, it's going to be a terrible speech, and it's going to be very boring. People are going to turn it off. And I'm going to get a mediocre response. If I go there and I give an ass-kicking attack on Bill Clinton, I guarantee you I can have them on their feet, but if I've got to reach out to Clinton several months later on the Russian situation, how am I going to be received, having just delivered a partisan attack on him? Not to mention, I will become the target. So I'm going to call and say, "Don't invite me, because I don't want to come." And I'm going to put out a statement to that effect.' "

Nixon was appalled as he watched the proceedings of the Convention in Houston from his New Jersey home. His old party as he understood it was sliding off the earth. "I talked to him every night, I talked to him every morning," Roger Stone said. "Sometimes he would call my hotel right after the Convention went out of session, so I would have to rush back to my room, and he was very blunt: 'Who the *hell* decided to put Pat Robertson on in prime time? It is inconceivable to me that they let Pat [Buchanan] get up there in prime time. Have him speak? Hell, yes, have him speak! But not on prime time!' And then he would say, 'Where are the blacks? Where are the Jews? Where are the Italians? Where are the fucking Hispanics? Has anybody thought through what we want this party to be? Who do we have to get to win this election?' "

UNTIL the end, Nixon was handicapping the race for the 1996 Republican nomination and working on his ties to the prospective candidates. It was a practice he had maintained as part of his own campaign for influence: in 1980 he dispensed advice to John Connally, Bob Dole, and George Bush; in 1988 to Dole and Bush; and in 1992 to Bush while unsuccessfully attempting to persuade Buchanan not to run. This time, according to Roger Stone, who is now a consultant to Arlen Specter's campaign, "He was advising Wilson at the same time he was advising Dole. He even encouraged Specter. He was being Nixon." Nixon also confided to Stone his assessment of Colin Powell, who was a White House Fellow during the Nixon Administration: "He's not Eisenhower. The people who liken him to Eisenhower don't know Eisenhower. . . . People don't understand how tough and ruthless Eisenhower was in the struggle to get to the top. Powell may be a great soldier, but he is not a politician. And I don't think he would survive in this realm. . . . Maybe for Vice-President, in a controlled environment. But the top spot? There's not going to be another Eisenhower."

But Nixon had left behind special instructions for Bob Dole. This May, Dole gave to the Los Angeles *Times*, the biggest newspaper in the biggest town in Pete Wilson's state, the contents of a parcel of letters addressed "Dear Bob" and signed by Nixon, written in the year before his death. The letters consisted largely of advice on how Dole's Presidential campaign should be run. Dole presented them as if they were a political will. Nixon had once told Dole that he was "the most dominant" Republican—more so than Nixon had been in 1968, when he won the nomination and the Presidency. "Don't let them get the impression that you are no longer tough," Nixon wrote. "Being tough with a smile is the best posture for you." According to the *Times* reporter Jack Nelson, Nixon also dictated the outlines of Dole's strategy: "You have to run as far as you can to the right, because that's where forty per cent of the people who decide the nomination are. And to get elected you have to run as fast as you can back to the middle, because only about four per cent of the nation's voters are on the extreme right wing."

The oldest man to seek the Presidency—at seventy-two, Dole is eleven years older than Nixon was when he

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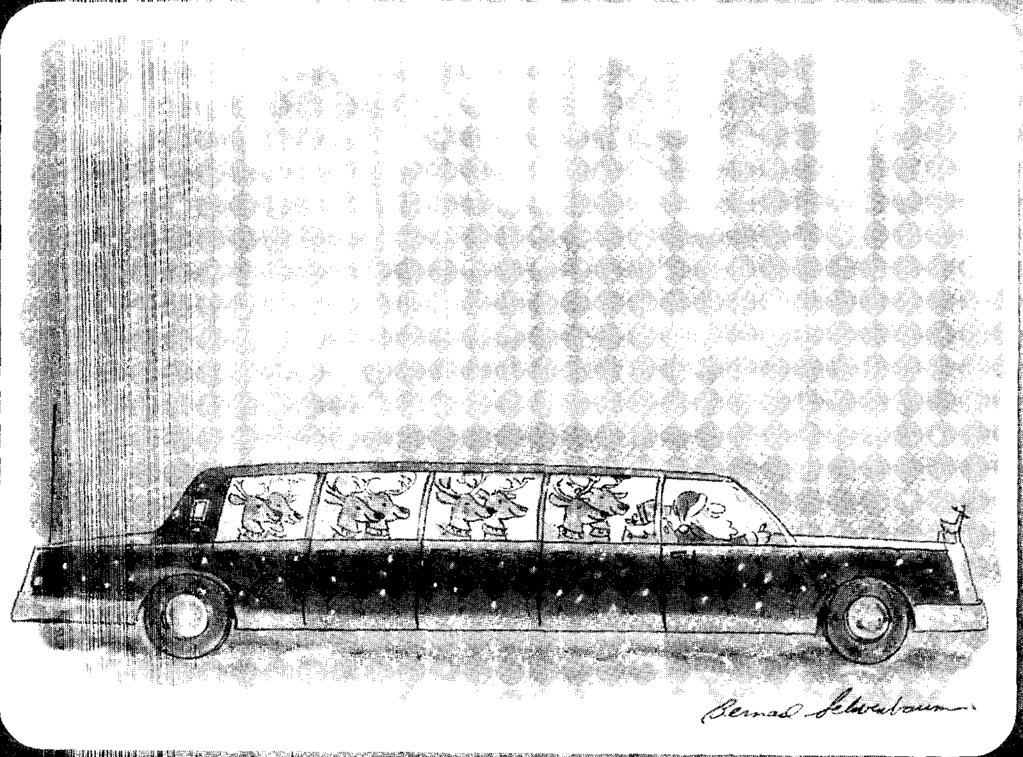

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resigned—still looked to his departed leader as a mentor. Release of the Nixon letters was a way of proving his standing: Dole the Dominant. This was not an authority flourished mainly for the benefit of the general electorate but one meant for the Republican leaders, among whom Nixon's endorsement might carry some weight. Of course, by releasing the letters, Dole also exposed the cynicism behind Nixon's strategizing and, by extension, the degree of premeditation and artificiality in his own forthcoming ideological maneuvering. From the start, he drew back the curtain to reveal a ghost pulling the levers.

Within weeks of making the Nixon letters public, Dole seemed to be acting out the script. The Senator launched his Presidential bid in earnest on May 31st with a fusillade against violence in the "liberal élite" media, including a shot at Oliver Stone's "Natural Born Killers." Afterward, Dole's handlers acknowledged that he had seen neither the movies he denounced nor the one he praised (Arnold Schwarzenegger's "True Lies"). His arguments had been ready-made and market-tested by conservatives like William Bennett. Dole was playing cultural politics, but he understood only the political part; for him, this was just another Nixonian appeal to right-wing primary voters. At the summer gathering of the Republican National Committee in Philadelphia, Dole declared, "I'm willing to be another Ronald Reagan, if that's what you want." In this throwaway line, Dole suggested that if he posed as an ideologue, which was what the Republicans seemed to be demanding, they would embrace him. It was an artless revelation of his easy contempt for Republican voters, particularly conservatives, and for Reagan.

This new Dole bears little resemblance to the old congressional dealmaker. George McGovern, Dole's former colleague in the Senate and Nixon's Democratic challenger in 1972, told me, "I think Dole had become less partisan over the years until he got in the battle for the nomination in a party that's moved all the way over to the right." Throughout the seventies, McGovern and Dole worked together on nutrition and agriculture issues, jointly sponsoring a food-stamp bill, which was perhaps Dole's most important legislative achievement. "The day after the election," McGovern said, "Gingrich called the President the worst thing he could think of—a 'counterculture McGovernik.' Dole will tell you good things about me, I'll tell you that." But probably not until after the primary season is over.

If Dole believes that he's paying homage to Nixon by taking his advice, and that he is replicating Nixon's own blueprint for victory, "he's wrong"—according to John Sears, a Washington lawyer who was the executive director of the Nixon for President Committee in 1968 and at the time a member of Nixon's law firm. "Nixon was ready to be conservative, and sometimes not, but ready to back up whatever it was," Sears said. "Dole is using Nixon as justification for what he's doing himself. He needs justification. That's the best he can come up with. He's just lurching around here trying to grow twenty fingers and stick them in dikes."

Nixon's own method, despite his advice to Dole, was not to run to the right and then scamper to the center but to run right and left at the same time, by occupying a movable center. His plan was constant: to play both ends against the middle. Within the Party, he appealed to conservatives and moderates on the basis of their dislike for each other. Nixon presented himself as the only possibility for fending off the threat from either wing; both had to support him as the practical alternative. Nixon's great talent was to transform not only his own resentments but others' resentments into political capital.

He was able to sustain his equilibrium because there were two wings of the G.O.P. to be balanced. In 1968, Nixon operated in the rubble the conservatives had made four years earlier in the Goldwater debacle. The right, moreover, lacked the clout to impose its new tribune, Ronald Reagan, as the nominee. Securing the right flank meant, basically, getting the endorsements of Barry Goldwater, William F. Buckley, Jr., and Strom Thurmond. In any case, the man who had burst upon the national consciousness in 1948 as the congressional prosecutor of Alger Hiss never had to prove his bona fides to the right. Nixon was the essential political creature of the Cold War, defining the Republican position from its beginning. As he demonstrated, anti-Communism was the crucial element in holding the conservatives together. But the Cold War that made Nixon is over. The Republican Party that boasted a Taft wing and a Dewey wing, a Goldwater wing and a Rockefeller wing, and that therefore provided a commanding role for a cynical centrist, is no more. The circumstances are different, the Party has shifted, the method is passé.

In his horror at the 1992 Convention, Nixon sensed the Party's further tilt to the right. He had adjusted to Reagan's ascendance long ago, but he hadn't anticipated the prominence of Robertson and Buchanan. So he advised Dole to run hard to the right, in the hope that there would, somehow, still be one more new Nixon. But without an encompassing reality like the Cold War, Dole flits from conservative issue to conservative issue; none of them have the power to establish the political coherence that anti-Communism provided.

Pete Wilson, like Dole, sees himself as Nixon's rightful heir, and is encountering similar difficulties. Wilson was once the quintessential moderate, the pragmatist's pragmatist, who took a problem solver's approach to what he called "preventive government." If he believed anything, it was that government was about competence, not ideology. Within the G.O.P., conservatives never forgave him for supporting Gerald Ford over the favorite son, Ronald Reagan, in 1976. Now, from the same Southern California political milieu that produced Nixon, Wilson is devising a post-Cold War campaign of nativism and racial and sexual antagonisms. The tactician doesn't look back with the slightest hint of regret at the positions he has just reversed: on immigration, on affirmative action, on gay rights. For Wilson, ideology has become another problem to be solved. But even as he redoubles his wooden turns, his standing in the polls remains static.

Nixon's world has passed. What remains is the character of Nixon, as eternal as Richard III: a persona more amenable to interpretation by a dramatist than by a politician. The more Nixon's pretenders try to imitate him, the more they falter. In comparison, he appears bigger than ever, larger than life. For Richard Nixon, 1996 is shaping up as his best election year since 1972. His name will soon be emblazoned as the title of a blockbuster movie. At last, Nixon will acquire the quality he sought in vain throughout his career: charisma. "It's like Elvis," said John Sears, who served as a technical adviser on Oliver Stone's movie. "Nixon isn't dead either." ♦

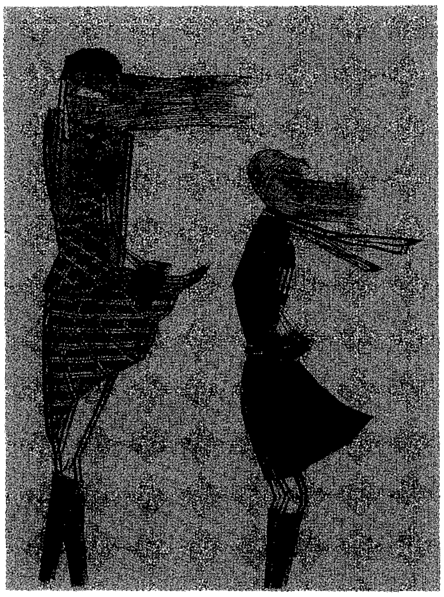
POPULAR CHRONICLES

HOT AND COOL

It used to be that the season dictated the look. But thanks to global warming, or something, it seems as though there aren't any real seasons left—so now what?

BY SUSAN ORLEAN

RECENTLY, I sat on a bench on upper Broadway and watched people walk by dressed in the confused clothes of September: a cotton T-shirt worn with a light flowered cotton miniskirt and heavy black tights; a corduroy apron dress worn without a shirt; cream-colored linen shorts with a thick, long-sleeved navy turtleneck; a tank top and leggings and a polar-fleece shirt jacket; a sleeveless blouse, a long plaid skirt, and black suède loafers; a leather jacket, shorts, and knee-socks; a crisp navy suit, navy stockings, and flimsy little sandals that were obviously meant for spring. At this time of year, people dress as if they'd lost their minds. It's hot, but it's autumn. It's sunny, but it's chilly. You're sick to death of your summer clothes, but it's too warm to wear what you've bought for winter. Sensory-wise, all this is an experience of pure chaos. Nothing quite makes sense when it comes to your clothes.



No one should wear a little summer outfit when the Greenmarket is selling pumpkins.

HIROSHI TANABE

The day I sat on Broadway, I, too, was a picture of chaotic thinking: a dark-brown wool bouclé jumper, no shirt, sandals. I probably looked insane, but this outfit was no impulsive pileup—I had actually changed three times before leaving my apartment. My first attempt involved a pink shirt printed with little black sea horses, a short black cotton skirt, and black slingbacks. I took them off: too beachy. Next, a long-sleeved black top and trousers, which was hot and gloomy. I ended up concocting my strange ensemble of wool and bareness out of desperation and the realization that I needed to hedge my bets. The weather that day was about seventy-three degrees, sunny, windy, and dry. It was warmish when I went out, but it would probably be chilly by evening. In my office, either the air-conditioning would be on or the radiators would be boiling. Plus, school was back in session. Of course, I'm not in school, but that doesn't matter. In September, I always feel an urge to get new outfits. The one thing I do count on in the disorder of fall weather is that, even if there is a numbing heat wave, I can no longer stand the sight of my summer clothes.

SOMETHING has obviously gone wrong with the seasons. I seem to remember that when I was a kid, in Cleveland, there were four distinct parts of the year, plus vacation. Climatologically, life was very orderly. It snowed a lot in the winter and was very hot in the summer, and in between it was in between. Fall was crisp and was distinguished by the resumption of school. Spring was balmy and was marked by finals. Resortwear, the fifth fashion season, had little effect on me, except that when my family planned a spring vacation somewhere tropical I could find a new bathing suit in the stores at home, even though there was still snow on the ground.

Now I have no idea what the weather

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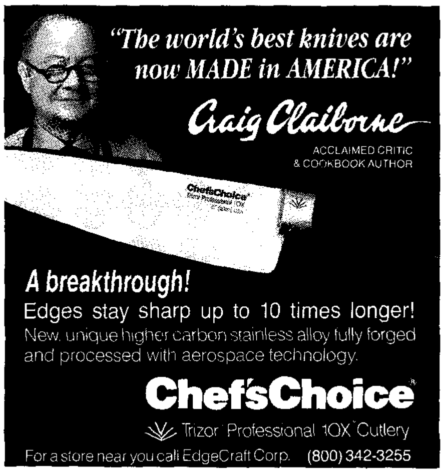

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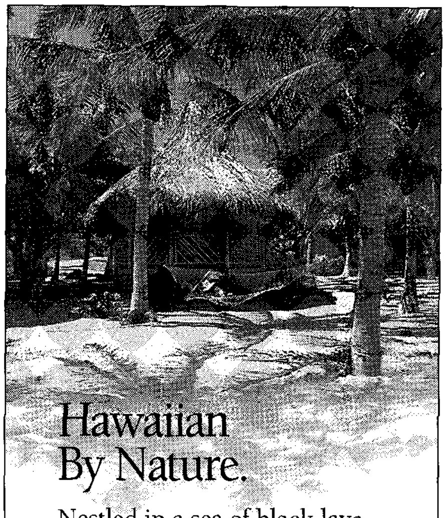

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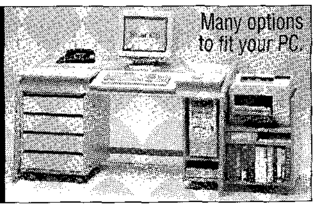
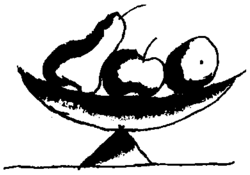


is like, ever. Global warming, or something, has made it mild enough to wear cotton in the winter, but air-conditioning has made most inside spaces so cold in the summer that I never go anywhere without a cotton sweater tucked in my handbag. In the winter, the heat in my building is so torrid that I haven't worn a heavy wool sweater since I moved to New York. Fair Isle sweaters are big this fall, but if you look carefully you'll notice that they are all made of cotton, because a real one, made of wool, would leave you parboiled. The seminal design of the past few years was Donna Karan's cold-shoulder dress, which was a tight, long-sleeved turtleneck dress with the fabric over the shoulders cut out—clearly a response to temperature disorder. I mean, is it a cold-weather turtleneck dress or a hot-weather bare-shouldered dress? In any case, the beautiful very bare shoulderless, backless, sleeveless tops I bought for summer would probably kill me if I ever wore them: I worry that I'll have one on while I'm in the direct aim of some air-conditioning duct and will end up catching my death of cold.

The new popularity of synthetics is probably the result of all this climatic turmoil, because synthetics have no inherent thermal properties: they adapt to whatever weather, actual or man-made, you are wearing them in. Take polar fleece, for instance. Polar fleece is a plush, spongy, totally artificial material that weighs nothing and conveys no quality of warmth or coolness; in fact, you can wear it in the most bitter weather or in the hottest heat. Polar fleece looks neither filmy and light nor hearty and warm. It has no historical, cultural, or physical association with a place, a season, a society, or any living thing. It is the first existential fabric—eminently useful, meaningless, dissociated, and weird. But shouldn't clothes be something? Wintry, summery, cozy, cooling—*something*? Polar fleece reminds me of electric blankets, which always were a little creepy, because they had heat that seemed unearned: a really hot blanket ought to weigh a lot—right? It also reminds me of space-food bars, which were marketed briefly in the sixties as the perfect food source: if you ate one of those little tubular food units you'd be nutritionally fulfilled. The only thing missing was the experience of *eating*. Space-food bars were not a success. Polar fleece, however, is booming, as are all synthetic fabrics, perhaps because it is easier to figure out what to eat than what to wear. There was a time when you could buy only rugged outdoor clothes made of polar fleece, but last winter the fabric was discovered by designers, who began producing urban-dweller-fashionable polar-fleece clothes, like scallop-necked cardigans and little vests. Of course, I now have a million things made of polar fleece; even though I'd always vowed I would never wear synthetics I've finally given in, because in this chaos of non-seasonal seasons a fake, seasonless, no-temperature fabric seems ideal. Maybe because I spend almost all my time in entirely man-made, manipulated environments, I should accept the fact that wearing clothes made out of little plants and animals has become almost quaint.



YOU know what I'm afraid of? A September wedding invitation. Actually, any September invitation, because the problem of what to wear, which is bad enough as a workaday issue, becomes enlarged at formal events, where feeling appropriately dressed is essential. Recently, I went to a luncheon attended by women who are famously well dressed. They showed up in a mishmash of attempts to match the season—everything from wool suits, in which they looked strangely bulky and grave, to little summer dresses, in which they looked wifty and silly and cold. These were people who can have any clothes they want! And even they're confused!

The problem is that no one should wear a serious wool suit with a tan; then again, no one should wear a little summer outfit when the Greenmarket is selling pumpkins. Oh, and legs—don't even mention legs. Of course, in early autumn it's too warm to wear opaque black tights, but being bare-legged after Labor Day feels like nudity. You could wear pants. But with what shoes? Real shoes are too solemn for September, but sandals look too slutty. There is no such thing as the perfect September shoe. And what a difference a few days make! The week before Labor Day, I went for a pedicure, and, when I was ready to leave, my nails weren't dry, so I walked home from the salon wearing those brown-paper thongy things, which the pedicurist had secured to my feet with rubber bands. I do not recommend this as regular footwear, but they actually didn't look all that weird, since the people I passed on the street were wearing flip-flops and slingbacks and strappy sandals and clear jellies. Amid such footwear, paper pedicure shields were only one deviation from the norm. But if I had walked out wearing them after Labor Day, I would have looked severely disoriented. Just the other day, I saw a woman wearing the first cowboy boots of the fall, which is as much an indicator of the change of seasons as a migrating goose. Of course, geese don't migrate anymore, because global warming has made it temperate enough for them to stay up north all year. And, by the way, the woman was wearing her cowboy boots with rayon shorts and a short-sleeved blouse, but that's September for you.

These days, you can't dress for the seasons, because they don't really exist; you can only dress for events. A few years ago, I went to the Isle of Skye, in Scotland, and I bought the most beautiful dark-brown oiled-wool cable-knit sweater from a farmer and his wife who'd raised the sheep, sheared the wool, spun the yarn, and knitted the thing. I may have even petted the sheep whose wool ended up as my sweater. I am deeply attached to this garment, yet I have never worn it. It's too hot for anything I ever do except on those broiling-hot summer days when the air-conditioning is on maximum cool, and then I wouldn't dare wear it, because it's so bulky and dark that I'd look completely demented. I know I would use the sweater a lot if I were a shepherd. Instead, what I do with my time is go to events, mostly indoors, and the controlling factor in what I choose to wear is the event I'm attending rather than the time of year: after all, a cocktail party requires a cocktail dress whether it's February or July. This is a whole new shift in my thinking, which might resolve not just the September problem but the whole problem of figuring out what to wear, and why.

A few weeks ago, I bought a dress I love: it is quite short, shift-shaped, with little cap sleeves, and made of flat, velvety fake ocelot fur. It sounds awful, but it's really great. When I brought it home from the store, I put it on and stared at myself in the mirror. In its style, the dress was summery, but the fabric colors were autumnal and the velvet texture made it seem like a winter thing. I started to panic, and called a friend. I told her that I loved the dress but had no idea when I'd wear it. What I meant was which season I would wear it in, but she took what I said another way. "I think it sounds like a perfect book-party dress," she said. "Keep it." I did, and she was right.

Sometimes when the seasons are most muddled, I think about all my clothes—stuff I bought to suit a very particular occasion or an odd moment in the weather or a singular mood I was in or a period of time when I wanted very much to look a certain way. Whatever the season (real or man-made), it is sometimes incredibly hard to figure out what to wear; at the very best, any item of clothing is exactly right once, and once only. And every now and then, I think about a dress I had, very briefly, when I was in the seventh grade. It was made of a material that was a little like a Bounty paper towel, and I think I got it by writing to the Scott Paper Company and sending in coupons, or something. Anyway, I thought this dress was the most exquisite creation. It felt like a feather, looked like pool-table felt, and was shaped like a schoolgirl uniform, and after you wore it once you threw it away. I don't recall what I did or what the weather was like when I finally wore it, but I know I was perfectly dressed that day. ◆

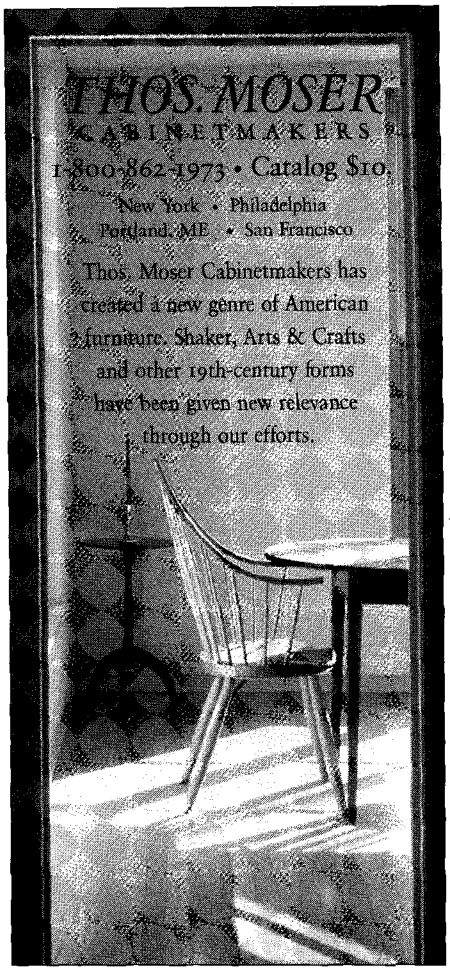
CORRECTION OF THE WEEK

[*From Business Insurance*]

The following corrects errors in the July 17 geographical agent and broker listing:

United States: Charlotte appeared twice in the North Carolina listing.

International: Aberdeen is in Scotland, not Saudi Arabia or England; Antwerp is in Belgium, not Barbados; Baie Mahault is in Guam, not Guadeloupe; Belfast is in Northern Ireland, not Nigeria; Bogota was listed twice in Colombia; Cardiff is in Wales, not Vietnam; Edinburgh is in Scotland, not England; Helsinki is in Finland, not Fiji; Moscow is in Russia, not Qatar; Nilsen Brothers has an office in Norway, not Oman.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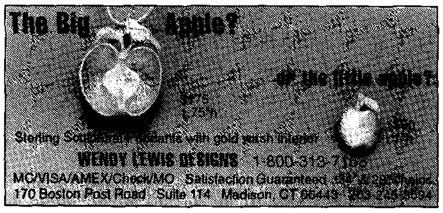

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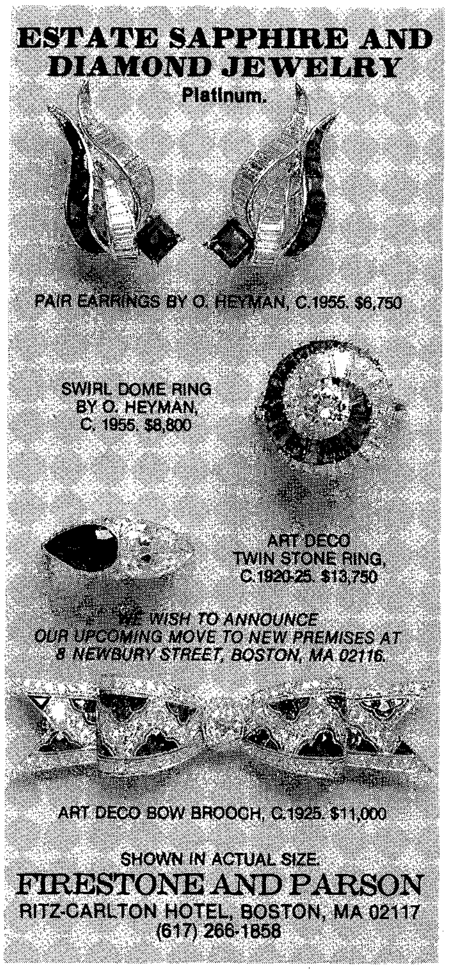
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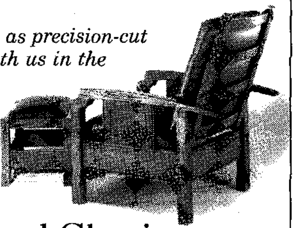
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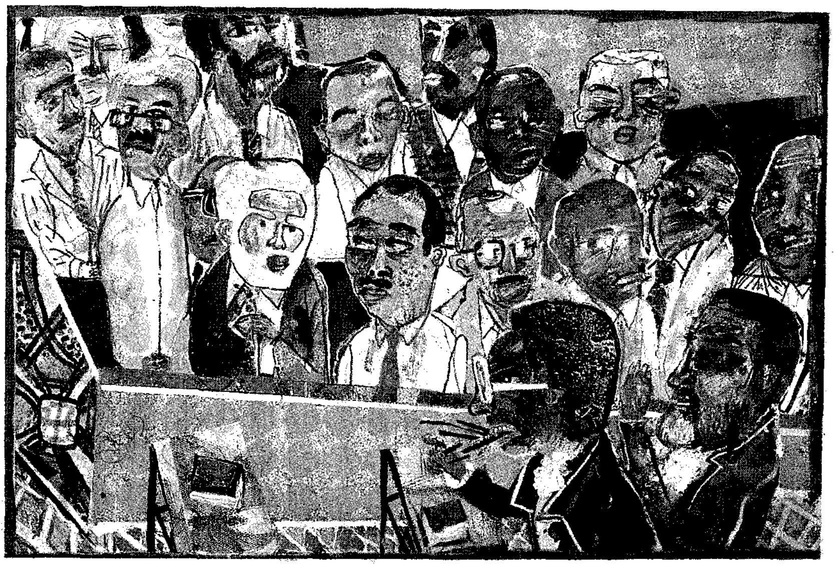
LETTER FROM ETHIOPIA

AN AFRICAN NUREMBERG

Their former rulers are on trial for the torture and murder of thousands—but many Ethiopians are more concerned about the present.

BY JOHN RYLE



At eleven o'clock, the justice began to read the charges; the recitation took him until the afternoon of the following day.

BETH BARTHOLOMEW

In Addis Ababa, on December 13th of last year, a blue bus with curtained windows, escorted by a motorcycle outrider and a pair of glinting all-terrain vehicles, brought forty-four prisoners—middle-aged men in suits and handcuffs—from an overcrowded prison called World's End to an improvised courtroom on the northern heights of the city. A few years earlier, the men on the bus had been all-powerful; their name, the Derg, the embodiment of dread. The Derg (an archaic word meaning "conclave" or "committee") was the military group that, under various names, ruled Ethiopia from September, 1974, when it deposed Emperor Haile Selassie, until its defeat, in May, 1991, by a rebel army from the northern Ethiopian province of Tigray.

Over those seventeen years, while famine and civil war devastated the country, Ethiopia was transformed from a feudal empire into a Communist dictatorship, which the Derg, with Soviet backing, ran with a ruthlessness unsurpassed in Africa, even in the violent history of Ethiopia itself. Mengistu Haile Mariam, the chairman of the Derg, ordered the imprisonment, torture, and murder of thousands of opponents of his regime, and brutal counter-insurgency operations in rural areas caused the deaths of at least a hundred thousand others. In the famine of 1984, as Ethiopians died by the thousands in the countryside, Mengistu hosted a lavish celebration of the Derg's tenth anniversary in Addis Ababa, hiding the emergency from the world. And when international relief agencies revealed the extent of the famine he used relief supplies as a weapon, diverting food away from needy rebel areas and selling the country's grain reserves to buy Soviet arms. In international human-rights circles, the trial of the Derg, which had been three years in preparation, was being spoken of as an African Nuremberg.

The men who emerged blinking from the bus had been young officers when they took power; now they were gray-haired, and two of them walked with canes. The first man out was Fikre-Selassie Weg-Deres, forty-nine, short, with eyes of flint—a captain in the Imperial Air Force who became the Derg's Prime Minister. Handcuffed to him was Fisseha Desta, fifty-three, the former Vice-President, an upright, bemused-looking man wearing tinted glasses. Following them shuffled the fifty-nine-year-old Colonel Teka Tulu, the former Chief of Internal Security—overweight, clearly unwell, glowering over a full beard.

Among the other prisoners, onlookers in the crowd outside the courtroom noted the unsmiling face of Legesse Asfaw, known as the Butcher of Tigray. Sergeant Legesse had been the mastermind of the Derg's war against the Tigrayan guerrillas. His response to the guerrillas' Maoist vision of their relationship to the peasantry—"like a fish through water"—had been to destroy the rural economy of Tigray Province, bombing village after village on market days. "To kill the fish, you have to drain the water," he had said. Following Legesse came Melaku Tefera, the equally infamous Butcher of Gondar. Now forty-two, Melaku had been the youngest member of the Derg—barely in his twenties when they assumed power. A stocky figure wearing a gray military anorak, which contrasted with the suits of his colleagues, Melaku was bristling with suppressed rage. There were spectators in the court who alleged that they had been tortured by Melaku personally. One woman had travelled three hundred miles—from Gondar, the province that Melaku had governed—for the satisfaction of seeing him in the dock.

But the spectators were not to have the satisfaction of seeing Mengistu Haile Mariam in court. In 1991, just a week before the rebels' victory, he had abandoned his followers to their fate and fled to Zimbabwe, where his uncle was Ambassador. The Zimbabwean government has never responded to requests for his extradition. On the eve of the trial, Mengistu broke a silence imposed on him by the Zimbabwean government and denounced the proceedings on the BBC World Service. Speaking by telephone from his home in Gun Hill, a suburb of Harare, he said that the new Ethiopian government was composed of mercenaries, that the charges were lies, and that the trials were merely the vengeance of the victors in a war that had been fought to preserve the unity of the country, a war that the forces of unity—his forces—had lost.

Among Ethiopians the issue of national unity is currently the focus of passionate debate. The Ethiopian empire, a multi-ethnic polity incorporating a great diversity of language groups, was dominated for more than a century by the Amhara, a highland people who are traditional rivals of the Tigrayans. Amharic is the language of government, and Amharas, by and large, run the bureaucracy. But in the aftermath of the Derg's collapse their special position has come under threat, as the new government has trimmed the bureaucracy, reformed land laws, and introduced a new constitution giving each major ethnic group control over its own region. At the same time the country has shrunk: the northern province of Eritrea became independent in May, 1993. For the Amhara élite, the double shock of the ascendancy of the Tigrayans and the loss of Eritrea has had a disorienting effect. It is as though Soviet Communism had been overthrown not by Russians but by Ukrainians, and the Ukrainians had taken power in Moscow.

THE courtroom where the trial of the Derg began—and where, after three long adjournments, the court will reconvene later this month—is an unremarkable wood-panelled circular hall in the Ministry of Central Planning. At 10 A.M. on the first day, while the prisoners waited outside, thirty-three defense lawyers, three red-gowned prosecutors, a hundred or so relatives of defendants and victims, a couple of dozen reporters and observers, an interpreter, and twenty khaki-clad guards filed into the courtroom and stood for the entrance of the Court President, Justice Dessalegn Alemu Kibret. Then the prisoners, their handcuffs removed, were ushered in through a rear entrance and instructed, one by one, to stand as their names were called. Above their heads on the ceiling, undisturbed since the heyday of their regime, was a bronze plaque with a hammer and sickle and a map of Ethiopia encircled by a quotation from Mengistu, redolent of Leninist hubris: "We Will Subdue Not Only Reactionaries but Nature Itself." At eleven o'clock, Justice Dessalegn banged his gavel, opened a red-leather-bound book of charges, and began to read; the recitation of the charges was suspended at two that after-

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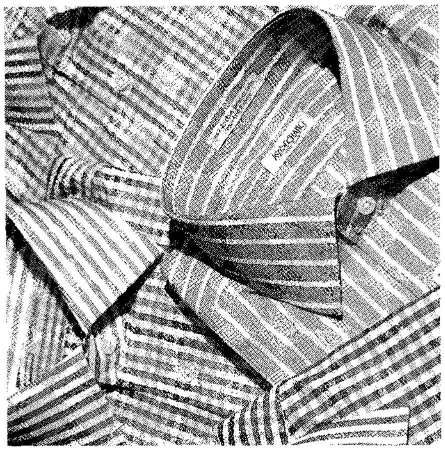

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noon and was not concluded until the afternoon of the following day.

There were more than a hundred members of the Derg in 1974, but when the judge called out their names less than half were present. Some had defected before the Derg fell; some had escaped abroad; two had died in prison; one had committed suicide. But the majority of the absentees—more than thirty—were victims of the Derg itself: they had been murdered by Mengistu's bodyguards during his rise to supremacy, or executed by firing squad in one of the periodic purges that followed coup attempts. For most of their careers, the greatest threat to the members of the Derg had been one another. Still, those present included eight of the regime's top twelve—the Standing Committee of the Derg.

The forty-four Derg members on trial are accused of the murders of the Emperor, of the Patriarch of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, and of fifty-nine ministers of the imperial court. They are further accused of killing, often by torture, nearly two thousand supposed members of rival revolutionary groups or supporters of the Emperor, mostly during a campaign of urban counter-insurgency which was christened, with conscious reference to both France and Russia, the Red Terror. Under the Napoleonic-style Ethiopian penal code, which incorporates the United Nations Genocide Convention of 1948, the Derg members are also charged with genocide and crimes against humanity, for which they could receive the death penalty.

On the face of it, the genocide charge seems odd. The Derg was undoubtedly responsible for terrible crimes, but it was not, in any ordinary sense, guilty of genocide: it did not—at least not during the Red Terror—kill people on the ground of race or creed. In the idiosyncratic provisions of the Ethiopian penal code, however, genocide has acquired a wider meaning, encompassing not just ethnic and religious groups but also political ones. Still, in case these charges don't stick the Ethiopian Special Prosecutor has added alternative charges of aggravated homicide, unlawful detention, and abuse of power.

The trial is only the first stage of a much greater legal undertaking. In addition to the members of the Derg, at least fifteen hundred other government officials and senior military personnel are in custody awaiting indictment for war crimes and murder. In a nation without a tradition of democracy or an independent judiciary, the trials raise tricky legal and political issues. The Nuremberg analogy is only partly accurate. Like Nuremberg, the trials in Ethiopia represent the justice of the victors. (This was Goering's defense, and it was to be the Derg's as well.) But unlike the Nuremberg trials and international tribunals under the jurisdiction of the United Nations which are currently being prepared for Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia, the trial of the Derg is being held in the courts of the country where the offenses took place: the Derg will be judged in Ethiopia, by Ethiopian judges and under Ethiopian law. Most important, unlike the Rwandan and Yugoslavian tribunals, which are mired in United Nations bureaucracy, the trials in Ethiopia are, albeit after several years' delay, actually under way.

Incoming governments in other conflict-riven African nations (South Africa is the prime example) have taken a different road—the one taken by Latin-American states in their transitions to democracy during the nineteen-eighties. This involves truth commissions and amnesties rather than large-scale prosecutions. Such procedures, it is argued, are a more effective means of national reconciliation; a retributive approach risks jeopardizing newfound peace. In this view, the important thing is to create a true record of events for posterity. But in Ethiopia the new rulers maintain—perhaps disingenuously, since they themselves have been accused of human-rights violations—that mass trials are the only way to end the culture of impunity which previous regimes exploited. In an interview earlier this year in Addis Ababa, the new Ethiopian Prime Minister, Meles Zenawi, told me, "We are not motivated by a desire for vengeance. The absence of a rule of law was the reason we had these tragic events. We had to come to terms with the events of those years. The only legitimate way was a trial."

SITTING next to me on the press bench in the court was a genial, elegant man in his early sixties, Teshome Gabre-Mariam Bokan. He had been Attorney General in the mid-sixties under Haile Selassie and a political prisoner for eight years under the Derg. "When I see the defendants," he told reporters, "my feeling is joy—joy that I am alive to see this, to see them confronted with the things they did. And sadness, at the thought of the millions of Ethiopians who did not live to see this day."

Teshome's career, which spans three regimes, is an illustration of the exceptional changes that Ethiopia, including its legal profession, has seen in a single generation. "You have to remember that we were a feudal society until a few decades ago," he pointed out. "We didn't have human rights. What we had was the divine right of kings."

A belated attempt by Haile Selassie to modernize Ethiopia's feudal system was one factor that led to the military takeover of 1974. Political ferment among students and young Army officers throughout the country provoked a coup in which the Emperor was deposed and his entire government put under arrest. The first of the counts against the Derg to be read in court concerned a mass execution that wiped out with one blow all the chief dignitaries of the ancien régime. Teshome described being arrested with them and incarcerated in the cellar of Menelik's Palace, a rambling collection of Ottoman-style wood and Italianate stone buildings, which was used after the revolution as the Derg's headquarters. Above the cellar was a throne room, and there the Derg deliberated on its prisoners' fate. In a small, tin-roofed pavilion nearby, the Emperor, old and sick, was held incommunicado. On the evening of November 23rd, guards came to the cellar and called out the names of fifty-six prisoners—ministers, the feudal dignitaries of the court, admirals, generals, and their bodyguards. Teshome and the other prisoners watched through the open cellar door as the group was driven away from the palace. Later they learned that the ministers, with three others who had been held elsewhere—fifty-nine in all—had been taken to the central

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prison, the same prison where the Derg members are now held. There, soldiers lined them up against a floodlit wall—the outer wall of an electrocution chamber installed by the Emperor—and raked them with machine-gun fire. They were buried the next day in a trench. "Their names mean nothing to you," Teshome said, "but I knew them all."

The fifth of the Derg's crimes to be detailed in the charges was the death of the Emperor himself. "His Imperial Majesty, Haile Selassie, King of Kings, Conquering Lion of the Tribe of Judah," the judge began, "was murdered in a cruel and disgraceful manner, suffocated in his bedchamber." There was an intake of breath in the courtroom. The interpreter, in his glass booth, stopped and coughed. Ethiopians have known for some years that the Emperor did not die a natural death—the man who killed him is rumored to be alive in Kenya (or, in other versions, Djibouti) or to have been put to death by Mengistu. But this was the first time the manner of his death had been officially announced.

A recess followed, and when it ended Teshome gazed at Fikre-Selassie and the others as they were ushered back into the courtroom. "Murder the Emperor!" he said. "A man of *eighty-three!* What was the point? They have no honor. They are baboons, children."

While the murders of the Emperor and his inner circle drew the most attention, the majority of the Derg's early victims were not ministers or other officials or members of the royal family but students who supported, or were suspected of supporting, one of the rival revolutionary movements—the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Party (E.P.R.P.), a soi-disant socialist-vanguard party, which attracted many of the country's young intellectuals. The Ethiopian revolution was one that consumed its children: in the chaotic early days, as the military consolidated its power, the E.P.R.P.'s campus utopianism mutated into urban terrorism; the Derg's response was the Red Terror, promulgated by Mengistu in a speech delivered in the heart of Addis Ababa. A histrionic speaker, Mengistu smashed vials of blood-red liquid on the ground to represent the death of imperialists and counter-revolutionaries. Even before the proclamation, young people were being detained, tortured, and killed by officials of the *kebeles*—precinct organizations established by the Derg to be their eyes and ears among the people. It was a time when inhabitants of Addis Ababa and other towns came to fear the worst: if their children did not come home at night, they were likely to turn up dead on the street in the morning, with a sign nailed to them saying "I Was an Anarchist."

In court, the defendants were clearly unrepentant. Fikre-Selassie, the former Prime Minister, in a long statement he had prepared, only part of which he was allowed to read to the court, argued that the measures taken in the Derg's name had been justified by the threat to civil order; that the charge of genocide was absurd; that the court was not independent and had not followed proper legal procedure. The present government, he argued, was illegitimate. If it wanted justice, there should be an independent international tribunal. At one point, Fikre-Selassie asserted that, under the code of procedure, he should have been charged within fifteen days of his arrest; Teshome, sitting next to me, muttered, "I don't remember him saying that when they put *me* in prison. It was he who *annulled* the procedural code."

In the case of many of the crimes committed under the Derg, however, the Special Prosecutor has what amounts to a written confession: in its paranoid fervor, the Derg expected *kebele* leaders to torture and kill; in its bureaucratic zeal, it required them to complete, in duplicate, a questionnaire that detailed contributions they had made to the revolution. The correct way to complete the questionnaire, for a cadre desirous of advancing his career—in an application for a Star of Lenin, say—was to list the names of suspected counter-revolutionaries he had eliminated. Thus, it seems, many signed what may turn out to be their own death warrants. The documentary evidence now in the possession of the Special Prosecutor's Office runs to more than three hundred thousand documents. The vast pile of evidence is a reminder of an earlier phase in the history of human-rights abuse: a time before governments learned to keep death squads unofficial, before they mastered the technique of the off-the-record death.

IN the part of the court reserved for relatives of victims sat an old man wearing an embroidered skullcap and immaculate white leather slippers. He was a Muslim grain trader from the highland region of Gurage, named Hajji Omar Jeju. During recesses, while the lawyers and the rest of us queued for coffee, Hajji Omar would take a jug of water to wash his feet and hands, then lay his prayer mat out on the lawn and face toward the north to pray. He stayed throughout the first day and returned the next, studying the accused through horn-rimmed spectacles and listening attentively to the list of charges. He was waiting to hear the name of his son. During the Red Terror, he told me, the two of them had been taken together by *kebele* officials to Menelik's Palace. There he had been forced to watch—a specialty of the Derg's interrogators—while the boy, an E.P.R.P. activist, was tortured, his fingernails pulled out with pliers, the soles of his feet beaten until he could not walk. At night, Hajji Omar had cradled his son in his arms to ease his pain. After several nights of this, the boy had been taken away by security police; his father never saw him again.

I asked Hajji Omar if he knew any of the defendants.

"I know all of them," he said. "When I was trying to find out what had happened to my son, I went to see Teka Tulu. I went to see Fisseha Desta. Then I tried to see Fikre-Selassie and Legesse Asfaw. And Debella Dinsa, because I knew he had interrogated him. But I failed. I was threatened with death if I pursued the matter. But I know which of them signed his death warrant."

On the second day of the trial, in the morning, Hajji Omar began to weep silently. We knew then that his son's name—Muhidin—had been spoken.

Hajji Omar had found out who signed his son's death warrant through the work of the Anti–Red Terror Committee, an organization of victims and relatives of victims that was established immediately after the fall of the Derg. He introduced me to the chairman of the committee—Astateke Chaka, a man about the age his son would have been. Like everyone in the court—like everyone in Ethiopia—Astateke had his story. His elder brother had vanished one day at the height of the Red Terror. The family found out what happened only by going to every hospital in the city until they found his body. He had been stabbed to death by *kebele* militiamen. "We had to pay three hundred birr"—about fifty dollars—"to get the body back," Astateke said. "That was normal. If someone was shot, the militiamen would say the money was to pay for the bullet. We were lucky to find him. Usually, the bodies were just thrown away."

Soon after the recovery of the body, Astateke's father was arrested and tortured. Then his mother. Astateke was ten years old. "We knew who killed my brother," he said. "They would sit and drink and boast about what they did. And at the women's meeting in the *kebele* cadres insulted my mother, saying, 'Why do you wear black? Your son was a dog.' My mother became angry and insulted them back. So they put her in torture. During the torture the scar from the operation she had when she gave birth to me burst open. But they weren't ready for her to die, so they brought her to the hospital, and we found her there. During that time, we had nothing to eat. People were afraid to visit us.

"Under the Derg, no one said anything about such things," Astateke went on. "People still don't like to talk about it. No one was allowed to mourn."

SYMPOSIUM

You can bring a horse to water but you can't make it hold
its nose to the grindstone and hunt with the hounds.
Every dog has a stitch in time. Two heads? You've been sold
one good turn. One good turn deserves a bird in the hand.

A bird in the hand is better than no bread.
To have your cake is to pay Paul.
Make hay while you can still hit the nail on the head.
For want of a nail the sky might fall.

People in glass houses can't see the wood
for the new broom. Rome wasn't built between two stools.
Empty vessels wait for no man.

A hair of the dog is a friend indeed.
There's no fool like the fool
who's shot his bolt. There's no smoke after the horse is gone.

—Paul Muldoon

OUTSIDE the courtroom, Addis Ababa appeared unchanged from the days of the Derg: an untidy town of tin roofs spilling down steep river valleys that are divided by ridges topped by a scattering of high-rises, palaces, and municipal buildings. Returning for the first time in three years, I was struck initially by the freedoms that the new government has introduced—a flowering of political parties and of the private press (newspapers, often violently critical of the government, were on sale at every road junction), and open discussion of the affairs of the country. Nevertheless, I found in Addis Ababa precious little trust in the new regime, and surprisingly little public enthusiasm for the trials.

The rebel coalition that controls the new government and is responsible for bringing the Derg to justice—the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (E.P.R.D.F.)—has a broad and growing range of critics. Spokesmen for opposition parties argue that the new rulers are merely paying lip service to human rights, and that the trials are a diversion, a ploy to win approval from Western donor countries—particularly the United States. (The United States, in fact, was instrumental in finessing the new government's entry into Addis Ababa; the coalition had deftly abandoned Marxism for free-market capitalism, making it an acceptable political client.) Western human-rights organizations have welcomed the initiation of legal proceedings, but a recent report from Amnesty International concluded that "the important message of the trials . . . will be undermined unless decisive action is taken to stop human rights violations perpetrated by those in power now." Those violations have included detaining hundreds of opponents without charges, "disappearing" dozens of others, and torturing some prisoners. It does not help that the chairman of the main Amhara opposition party was sentenced to five years in jail in 1994 on a dubious conviction for plotting armed rebellion.

But for most Ethiopians, the trials and the related question of civil liberties are subsumed in a larger issue, the issue that Mengistu raised in his defense of the Derg: national unity, which in Ethiopia, the most culturally diverse nation in Africa, is inextricably enmeshed with the ethnic question.

The core of the new government is the Tigrayan People's Liberation Front, the leading rebel group and one of the main targets of the Derg's rural counterinsurgency campaigns. Today, Tigrayan sentries, with wild hair and tiny double cicatrices on their temples, discreetly patrol the streets of Addis Ababa. Tensions between Tigrayans and Amharas that began with the Tigrayan victory and have been exacerbated by the secession of Eritrea are crystallized in the new constitution, which divides what remains of Ethiopia into self-governing regions based on language and ethnicity, each with the right of secession. As an attempt to recognize the reality of ethnic difference and establish equitable relations between the various groups it is a radical and ambitious step, one that other African countries have balked at. But the Amharas, widely distributed as they are, fear ethnic cleansing. "Look at Rwanda," an Amhara intellectual said to me. "Look at Yugoslavia. Look at what happens when you lift the lid on all this. Ethnic politics is irresponsible. It's anthropological adventurism. The E.P.R.D.F. are dismembering the country."

Andreas Eshete, another Amhara intellectual, suggests that beneath the passionate nationalism so many of his countrymen express—epitomized by the recurrent image of dismemberment—there is a kind of mourning for the terrible losses of the Derg years. "Most of the people who go on about the loss of Eritrea have never been there. It's really a kind of separation anxiety, a dream they have of the body politic being whole and inviolate. Everyone lost something in the war. This is the way people bring their feelings to the surface: it's not Eritrea they are mourning, it's themselves. Eritrea stands for your mother, your husband, your son."

For politicians, though, the issue is one of power and legitimacy. The leading opposition figure in Ethiopia now is Dr. Beyene Petros, who heads an umbrella group to which many of the opposition parties belong. "There are two opinions about the trials," Dr. Beyene told me. "An extreme one is that this government has no legal or moral right to put these people on trial. Those who hold this view accuse it of atrocities comparable to those of the Derg. Myself, I hate the self-righteous attitude of the E.P.R.D.F. guys—as though they were performing some miracle. And I don't think the fact that they are bringing the Derg to court clears them. But our position is that the trials should go ahead; and the trials should get to the abuses of the Tigrayan People's Liberation Front itself, past and present."

Tafari Wossen, a journalist I've known since the days of the Derg, who now edits an English-language news review in Addis Ababa, said, "We learned a terrible thing in Mengistu's time. We learned noncompromise. In 1974, people who could have taken up arms submitted themselves to the Derg. The Emperor himself did so. They had no idea of the catastrophe that was to come. The Derg taught us: don't wait for justice—not with any government. That's what is behind the intransigence of the opposition."

PRIME MINISTER MELES ZENAWI, Ethiopia's fourth head of state since the First World War, is an intense, ascetic man, whose style is a contrast with the Soviet-inspired personality cult of his predecessor. Not even his name is his own: Meles is a nom de guerre, adopted in honor of another T.P.L.F. fighter, killed in the early stages of the guerrilla war.

Meles's task is daunting: a country almost destroyed by war, constantly prone to famine, and flanked by neighbors—Sudan and Somalia—that are in a state of near anarchy. His view of the ethnic question in Ethiopia is a mirror image of the opposition's. He maintains that without reform the country will fall apart. "Things are at a crucial stage," he told me. "If the reforms founder, we will have a very inflammable mixture of ethnic and religious problems in this country. We are trying to preëmpt what has happened to Yugoslavia, what happened to Liberia, what happened to Somalia, and what may yet happen to many other African countries, including some of our immediate neighbors. Every African country is a potential failed state. And we are in a race to get out of this league."

I asked Meles why people who had experienced the oppression of the Derg should still be so opposed to the E.P.R.D.F.

"Politics in this country was essentially armed politics," he said. "So victories and defeats were total, or were perceived to be so. Today, the transformations we are undertaking are so fundamental that it wouldn't be surprising if there was significant polarization. The Derg is finished, but we are saying nobody is above the law. That includes people at the highest level of authority."

What about Mengistu? I asked.

"It's important that we get Mengistu," the Prime Minister said. "But even if we don't, the fundamental message will still be conveyed."

It is not easy for a foreigner to learn at first hand what the majority of the population of Ethiopia—remote and unlettered—really thinks about the trials of the Derg. In Addis Ababa, public feeling about the trials is conditioned by opposition to the government. Outside the capital, the lack of visible public interest may owe more to the indifference that comes of long suffering: if you are a peasant farmer in Ethiopia, the accountability of government officials is a distant issue, less pressing than the coming of the rain. For many Ethiopians, moreoever, the question of justice is less pressing than the proper observance of the rituals of mourning. As Astateke Chaka, of the Anti–Red Terror Committee, pointed out, "Having names is not the same as having the bodies, having bodies is not the same as having a burial. Muslims and Christians died together in the Red Terror: their bones are all mixed up. It would be better to put them in a museum."

I asked him if he had heard of Tuol Sleng, the museum in a former Khmer Rouge torture center in Cambodia. "Yes," he said. "And we have somewhere like that. It is called the Bermuda. They used to torture people there. It was like the Bermuda Triangle—no one ever came out. I'd like to make the Bermuda into a museum."

As the judge came to the end of the charges, the Bermuda came up again. It took me back, with a shock, to my first visit to Ethiopia, eleven years ago. Though Teshome said, as we listened to the roll call of the dead, that the names would mean nothing to me, there was one exception. Count No. 186 concerned the first Ethiopian who had invited me to his home—Dr. Mengesha Gebrehiwot, a debonair ex-Minister and former dean of the University of Addis Ababa. Dismissed after the Derg takeover, Dr. Mengesha, with his famously beautiful wife, Almaz Teklu, opened a travel agency called Wonderland, near Meskal Square. It was part of their work to deal with the few foreigners who came to Ethiopia at that time, but such contact with outsiders laid them open to the baleful attention of security men.

When the judge read out Mengesha's name, I felt a stab of guilt. Since 1984, I had not tried to make contact with him or with Almaz. I had passed Wonderland once, in the late nineteen-eighties, and seen that it was boarded up. Now he was dead. The charge detailed his detention, with twelve others, "in the Central and so-called Bermuda investigation departments, under conditions where there was no food or medicine, and not enough air, nor sufficient place to sleep—these conditions calculated to result in their death, having arbitrarily designated them as anti-revolution, anti-people, and subversive members of the E.P.R.P., E.P.L.F., T.P.L.F."

Such were the terms exhumed by the Special Prosecutor from the documents of the former regime: "feudal remnants," "reactionaries," "anarchists," and—a bizarre oxymoron—"anti-people elements." These were the categories to which brothers, husbands, daughters, sons, friends, and acquaintances had been reduced by the Derg's hand-me-down totalitarianism. They recurred hypnotically in charge after charge, the judge rattling them off at the unrelenting pace of a tobacco auctioneer, determined to get to the end of the red book of charges before the end of the day. The court translator—there was only one—had long since abandoned any hope of keeping up with him. Phrases floated in the sunlit air like particles of dust: "taken in the darkness of the night," "murdered in his bedchamber," "thrown on the fields of Desse," "subjected to torture," "in the Bermuda." There was a touch of found poetry in the translation: several times the translator referred, serendipitously, to "the Red *Error*."

By the time we got to Dr. Mengesha, some of the defendants were dozing, even as the crimes committed in their name were held up to the light. Teka Tulu, obese and said to be diabetic, had been asleep for some time. No one woke him.

After the reading of the charges ended, I tried to find out more about the fate of Dr. Mengesha. It turned out that Almaz was still living in the city and had just reopened Wonderland—this time as a hairdressing salon. When I called on her there, she showed the strain of the years since I had seen her last. After Mengesha's arrest, she told me, security men came to ask about their eldest son, then just fourteen; a foreigner who was a friend of the family got him out of the country by pretending he was the son of his maid. For the next seven years, Almaz had no contact with her son. And for those seven years she did not know for certain whether Mengesha was dead or alive, whether the food she took to the jail was given to him or taken by the guards. She found out only after the E.P.R.D.F. takeover that he had died in detention, less than two years after his arrest.

"I found out from the television," she said. "I was watching with my youngest son. There were people arguing. I thought it was a play, a soap opera. Then I heard Mengesha's name. They were talking about the Bermuda, interrogating a man who had tortured people there. Another man who had been a prisoner, a man with only one eye, was describing how Mengesha died, how they cut his leg while they were torturing him and it became infected with gangrene. I suddenly realized what they were talking about. It was a shock—it was horrible. I had to take my son out of the room."

One day during the trial, Almaz told me, she had gone to the court to see the Derg in the dock. "I don't want to go again," she said. "The way they talk . . . They have no sense of sorrow. They have no regret at all. They think they did a great job. How can you forgive people like that?"

After a number of inquiries, I was directed to the site of the Bermuda by a former detainee, one of the few who had survived there. He was not willing to be named, nor would he accompany me beyond the gate. To go inside the building, I had to be escorted by a police major from the Department of Internal Affairs. The Bermuda was a nondescript villa near a church in a suburb at the southern edge of the city. A house with no number, it was occupied now by demobilized soldiers, who were barely aware of its previous function. The only thing that distinguished it from its neighbors was a concrete bunker beneath the garden. It looked like a fallout shelter but might have been a septic tank. It was half full of water, and there were dark stains on the walls. "That's where they kept the prisoners," the ex-detainee told me later. "*Not enough air, nor sufficient place to sleep.*" The man from the Department of Internal Affairs had said, "I don't like coming here."

"Are you sure this was the place?" I asked the ex-detainee afterward.

"There are many Bermudas," he replied. "The whole city was a Bermuda."

WORLD'S END, where so many of the Derg's victims were held, and where they are now prisoners themselves, is a two-story octagonal building—a prison within a prison, overlooked by the silvered dome of a church. Guards with machine guns patrol the roof; an iron gate opens on a small courtyard. Here, after each day's hearing, the accused Derg members would return. The day I visited, it was a scene of intense activity. In the courtyard and on a first-floor walkway, several hundred

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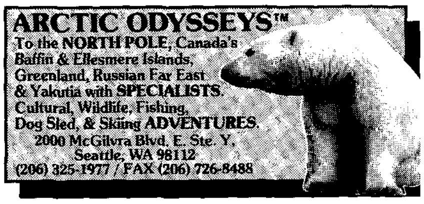

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prisoners were sitting or moving about. Some were praying; some were playing poker; some were playing table tennis; some were just walking back and forth. A handful of the senior officers were playing Risk, a board game whose aim is world conquest. All the Derg members in government custody were here, as were many others who had been detained after the E.P.R.D.F. takeover. Some, I discovered to my surprise, had been there before—under the Derg. One of them, a slight man in a nylon jacket, told me, "I was here for four years. I was tortured here. The person who did it is over there"—he pointed at another inmate—"but please don't ask him about it. It could make things difficult between us."

Legesse Asfaw and Melaku Tefera, the most notorious of the jailed Derg leaders, were unwilling to talk, but I spoke at length, unescorted, with Mengistu's second-in-command, Fikre-Selassie Weg-Deres, and with Fisseha Desta, Mengistu's Vice-President, No. 3 in the regime.

Fikre-Selassie repeated, with didactic precision, the story of the Derg's coming to power—the injustice of the feudal regime, the violence of the student movement, the fight for power in the Army, the threats from guerrilla forces. "Drastic measures were taken," he said. "This created so many enemies."

I asked him why the Derg had not come to an agreement with the rebel forces, such as the T.P.L.F.

"They were for secession," he said. "We were not in a position to accept. It was the will of the people."

I asked if he thought that Mengistu had done the right thing in running away.

"It was not in the interest of the people," Fikre-Selassie said. About the illegitimacy of the current government he was adamant: "These people—the Tigrayans—are an ethnic minority. They should not be ruling. They are not competent to try us."

I sought out Fisseha Desta. Fisseha had been the only Tigrayan on the Standing Committee of the Derg, and that position had become increasingly awkward as the Tigrayan rebel army approached Addis Ababa. Some had expected him to be the one to broker a deal with the rebels. In talking to Ethiopian journalists about Fisseha, I had caught a note of mingled contempt and pity. One of them recalled meeting him in the sauna at the Hilton Hotel: "He would talk about the government as if he weren't part of it, though he was Mengistu's right-hand man at the time."

I found Fisseha sitting outside the cell he shared with half a dozen other prisoners. There were smears of blood on the wall from squashed bedbugs. He offered a significantly more self-critical account than Fikre-Selassie's of the Derg's time in power. "It's true that absolute power corrupts," Fisseha said. "The Derg should have gone sooner—but not this way."

I asked if he had ever thought of resigning or defecting.

"It was hard to resign," he said, with a half smile. "Mengistu was somewhat uncompromising on such issues. And my presence in the government helped protect Tigrayans in Addis Ababa.

"Mengistu betrayed us," Fisseha concluded. "He should have come to terms with the rebels or stayed to die. But instead he is drinking beer in Gun Hill."

THE trial of the Derg reconvened in May, for a single day, to hear the Special Prosecutor rebut the defendants' objections to the charges: he argued that precedents for such a trial were well established internationally. Then it was adjourned again, until this month. After the best part of a year, the legal skirmishes are over; there is a vast amount of documentary and forensic evidence to consider, and there are many witnesses to be heard—some of whom have waited twenty years to tell their stories. There will no doubt be more recesses and adjournments, more challenges to the legitimacy of the court. The trials—if they continue—will go on for years. Perhaps this slow process is one way that Ethiopians can draw the sting of the past. The Derg members are condemned, in effect, to years and years in limbo—condemned, in fact, to some of the same dull uncertainty, the same endless fear without resolution, that their countrymen endured for so long. In the end they will almost certainly face the death penalty, unless Meles Zenawi grants them clemency. Outside the prison, their legacy of suffering, loss, poverty, and distrust endures. As Tafari Wossen said, "People used to fear the Derg. Now they fear the future." ♦

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PERSONAL HISTORY

HOW I SURVIVED THE FIFTIES

Excerpts from the memoir that the author said he wouldn't write.

BY GORE VIDAL

I HAVE always been curious to know where writers are physically situated when they write memoirs. Their placement in works of the imagination is less interesting, because the true geography of a novel is all in the mind. But a memoir is set off by a thousand associations, often by objects in a given room. In this case, the given room is in Ravello, a town on the Italian coast south of Naples. The room is white with an arched ceiling and a window to my left that looks across the Gulf of Salerno toward Paestum. Opposite me there is a large gray tufa-stone fireplace with elaborate green-yellow-blue tiles. On a console to its right, a photograph of Tennessee Williams with Maria St. Just. She died a few months ago, and her daughter has been staying here. Tennessee looks away from Maria, who looks at him. This was long ago. In Key West.

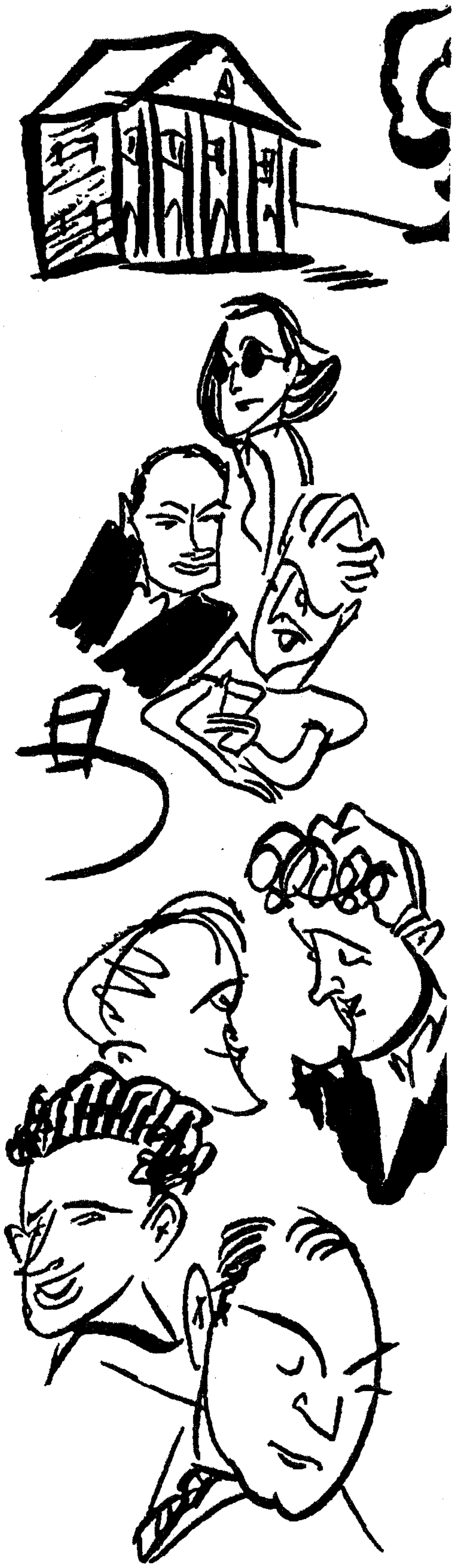
On the other side of the fireplace, a photograph of me with the President who did us the most harm, Harry S. Truman. He has come to Fishkill to speak for me in my race for Congress. It is the year 1960. I gaze fawningly upon him while, all about us, the flower of Tammany Hall stare straight ahead. Then a photograph of me, welcoming Jack Kennedy to Dutchess County. He has just been nominated for President. We are both very young, to state the obvious.

By the door, two framed documents: my honorary citizenship of Ravello and my honorary citizenship of Los Angeles, the one and the other of my—home?—towns. A week ago, in the gardens of the Villa Cimbrone, just above our place, there was an homage to the films that I have written. Characteristically, it began with "Bob Roberts," a film in which I only act. Since the writer-star-director Tim Robbins and his friend Susan Sarandon were staying with us, it ended up as an homage to Tim, which was just as well, though the Italian parliamentarian for culture, Vittorio Sgarbi, a colorful art historian and television "personality," was still able to continue his long public debate with me on who makes the movies. This is a subject that everyone knows all about except those of us who have actually made a film.

A memoir is how one remembers one's own life, while an autobiography is history, requiring research, dates, facts double-checked. I've taken the memoir route on the ground that even an idling memory is apt to get right what matters most.

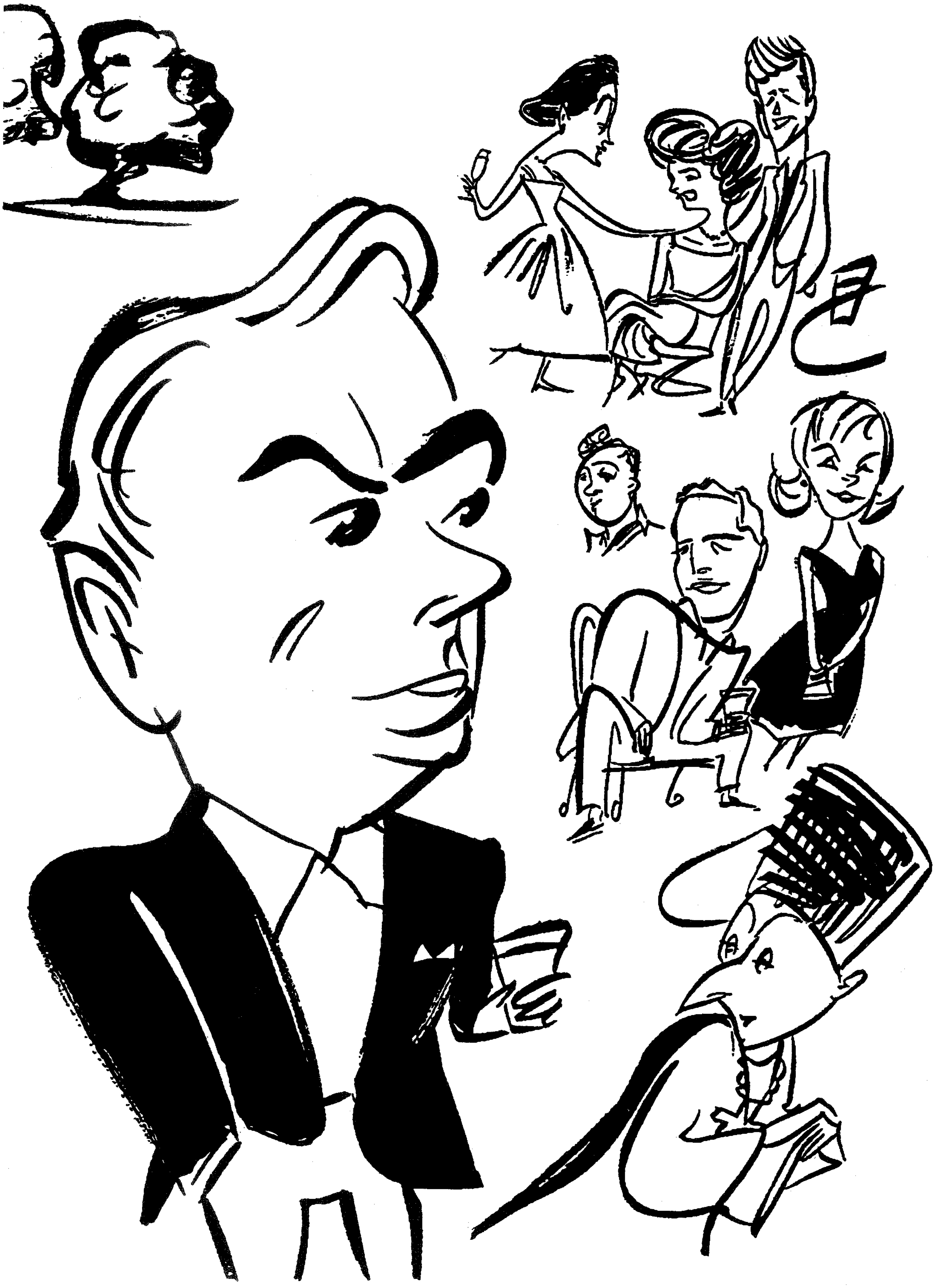
IN the spring of 1950 I was twenty-four and had just published "The Season of Comfort." Although I have never reissued the book, it was as close to an autobiographical novel as I was to write until "Washington, D.C." I was ready to settle down, somewhere near but not in New York City, since the Russians were coming and the Bomb would soon fall in the night. The great perpetual American war machine was humming smoothly, and though it was still officially peacetime (soon we would have a proper war in Korea), Truman had instituted a would-be "permanent" draft, something previously unknown to us. Income taxes were as high as ninety per cent in order to pay the defense cartel to keep the arsenal of democracy full of weapons so that we could help all the peace-loving little countries everywhere on earth whether they wanted to be helped or not.

Meanwhile, charges of Communism at home were beginning to ruin the careers not only of those few who had actually been Communists but of many others who held unpopular views on politics or sex or race or religion. Truman introduced the loyalty oath for federal employees; this, in turn, made it



Gore Vidal with, clockwise from lower left: Louis Auchincloss, Norman Mailer, Truman Capote, Paul Bowles, Fred Dupee, Saul Bellow, Greta Garbo; Alice Astor Bouverie, Jack and Jackie Kennedy; Howard Austen; Paul Newman and Joanne Woodward; Edith Sitwell.

ILLUSTRATION BY TOM BACHTELL



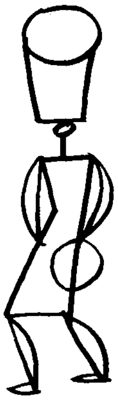
possible for the likes of Senator Joseph McCarthy—our Titus Oates—to flourish. Who was loyal? Who was disloyal? American or un-American?

Allen Ginsberg thinks of those years as a liberating time. I don't. I remember only conformity and fear and silence. The Beats thought that they had made a great gesture by opting out and going on the road to Morocco, not to mention to pot, but they were never *in* anything to begin with. They were marginal people who would have gone unnoticed had it not been for Allen's genius as a publicist. But then once they had finally made it to a degree of television fame, they let themselves be patronized by lumpen-imperialists of the far right like Buckley, Jr.

At that time no writer of my generation was truly political except Norman Mailer, who had nobly spoken out for Henry Wallace, the sole politician in the 1948 election to draw attention to that great con game the National Security State. Wallace was duly demonized as a Communist and flushed from the system. Two years later I met Mailer at the novelist Vance Bourjaily's house. Vance and his wife had organized a sort of New York literary salon, which tended to net writer-writers rather than teacher-writers. Fags were shunned (if not well closeted), while the Jewish writers tended to center around *Partisan Review.* Except for Tennessee Williams and Paul Bowles and Louis Auchincloss, I never really got to know most of my contemporaries. I had the impression, no doubt an unjust one, that many of them were only playing at being writers, each modelling himself on one of the three prototypes of the previous generation—Faulkner, Hemingway, Fitzgerald.

I was invited to lunch one day by a very ambitious, very young Southern novelist who wanted to shine in those social circles that are, for the most part, closed to very young ambitious Southern writers. Like Truman Capote, he wanted to be accepted by what was known then as café society and, like Capote, he had mistaken it for the great, largely invisible to outsiders, world that Proust had so obsessively retrieved from lost time.

"Can you come to lunch with Alice Astor Bouverie?" The maiden name was trumpeted in my ear. When I paused, not knowing who she was, he said, "*Truman* will be there." Plainly, he believed that Truman's presence, as arbiter, would convince me that the extended ladder was secure. But I had already observed various Astors at Newport, Rhode Island. The Auchinclosses, the family of my stepfather, Hugh, tended to disdain the Astors as flashy even though the Auchinclosses were far newer on the scene and, despite Hughdie's healthy infusion of Standard Oil money through his mother, nowhere near as rich as John Jacob Astor, who had gone down with the Titanic, leaving three children, Vincent, Alice, and, by a later wife, the posthumously born John Jacob V, whose stepbrothers had been in school with me.



I forget where the lunch was held or who else was there. Alice was a year older than my mother. She was slender, dark, pale-skinned; from some angles she was beautiful. Her mother, Ava, after her divorce from Astor, married the rakish Lord Ribblesdale (nicely painted by Sargent); they settled in England, where Alice was brought up. Alice had four husbands and four children. In order to accommodate the latter, she had built herself a gray stone manor house at Ferncliff, the Astor estate on the Hudson. The house was set far back from the river road, which winds through the wooded estates of Delanos, Vanderbilts, Aldriches, Roosevelts, not to mention Edith Wharton's House of Mirth, built by Ogden Mills. But by 1950 there was not a good deal of mirth in any of the houses. Families had died out or broken up, while the postwar economy had eliminated that principal support of any hereditary aristocracy, the servant class.

Alice inherited five million dollars from her father; when she died, in 1956, she left exactly five million dollars, despite the extravagance of her husbands as well as generous gifts to all sorts of mysterious adventurers aprowl in the psychic world. Alice had once been Queen Tiy in Pharaonic Egypt. She had also come into possession of the queen's necklace, which looked cursed to anyone like me, who had been brought up on the film "The Mummy." I make her sound silly. But she was not. She liked the arts and artists. She liked the night best of all. With a few friends she would talk, play Chinese checkers, speculate on mysteries, and watch the sun rise as gray lawns turned green. She always seemed to me to be somewhat misplaced in America. At Ferncliff she lived as if she were still English. Frederick Ashton, the Sitwells, various Churchills came to stay. I used to visit on weekends.

Alice had done considerable research to establish, to her own satisfaction if not that of brother Vincent, that the Astors had once been kosher butchers in Waldorf, Germany. She thought this a nice antidote to the snobbism of her grandmother Caroline, "the Mrs. Astor" whose delicious task it was, through her court chamberlain, Ward McAllister, to exclude from society all but the four hundred Old Guard New Yorkers she could insert into her ballroom. Alice preferred more raffish—not to mention more interesting—company.

One winter day she drove several of us north along the river road to a deserted house called Edgewater, so named because the lawn ended at river's edge; three acres of locust trees, willows, and copper beeches provided a miniature park. The house was Greek Revival: six tall columns fronted a cinnamon-colored stucco façade. It was built in 1820 by the Livingston family, to whom a Stuart king had granted what would be a substantial part of New York State. At one end of the house an octagonal library had been added, the work of A. J. Davis. In time, Alice's relatives the Chanlers acquired the place. A Chanler lady married John Jay Chapman, easily the most original of American essayists, and he lived at Edgewater while he built a house for himself nearby. "Coldest winter I've ever spent," he said of his brief stay. He also wrote, "The thing that stirs us in any man's writing is the man himself—a thing quite outside the page, and for which the man is not responsible."

We approached the house from the unimpressive back, where the original driveway had been replaced by the New York Central Railroad, thus making the house unlivable for two generations. By 1950 the trains were cleaner and fewer, though no less noisy. Through tall grass where once a lawn had been, we came around the house and there I first saw the row of columns and the wide view of river with the blue Catskill Mountains beyond.

Although I was short of money that year, I managed to buy Edgewater for six thousand dollars and a ten-thousand-dollar mortgage, which, had I not discovered television four years later, I would have had a hard time paying off. Alice lent me some of the furniture that she was obsessively acquiring for the return to London that would never take place. In July, 1950, I moved in. I was not yet twenty-five and oblivious of what I had taken on.

I set about putting the place in order. With a borrowed scythe, I painfully restored the lawn. A small island went with the property and on hot summer days I'd swim out to it. In winter I'd walk to it over glacier-thick ice that creaked and groaned as the river's current broke the shifting ice floes. Summers were too hot; winters too cold. Spring was best. Lilies of the valley grew wild. A huge weeping willow at lawn's edge. A collapsed boathouse with copper roof. White red-bordered peonies in a row beneath the colonnade. Locust trees with white, densely rose-fragrant blossoms. Idyllic season.

During my first four years at Edgewater, I could not stop reading. I got through James (the New York edition, for which I paid a hundred and twenty-five dollars, all that I had in the bank). I read through Smollett, too. Then—secondhand books were cheap in those days—I discovered George Saintsbury, unaware that he was out of fashion. Saintsbury led me into French literature. He also led me to the essay; and, best of all, to Montaigne. Although I had written occasional book reviews in the papers of the day, I never wrote a proper essay until 1954, when I read a translation of Suetonius' "Twelve Caesars." Suddenly, I had so many new thoughts on the subject of sex and power that I was obliged to put them down, not for publication but just to clear my own mind. Eventually, the piece was published (though a dozen papers turned it down as much too radical), and that is how I became an essayist. I wrote first for myself; then for those few readers who might be interested in the resulting *essai,* the French word for "attempt."

Meanwhile, I was going broke. Labor Day, 1950, I met Howard Austen. He worked for an advertising agency in New York; on weekends he came up to Edgewater. Alice and her group liked him; that is, the new group that I had helped her assemble, based on John Latouche, whose wit delighted her almost as much as their shared passion for the night. Touche had written "Ballad for Americans" in his youth. He also wrote lyrics for "Ballet Ballads" and "Cabin in the Sky." He was a wit of the hard-drinking Irish school; he was always broke; he pretended to be a Communist, and was much blacklisted in the fifties.

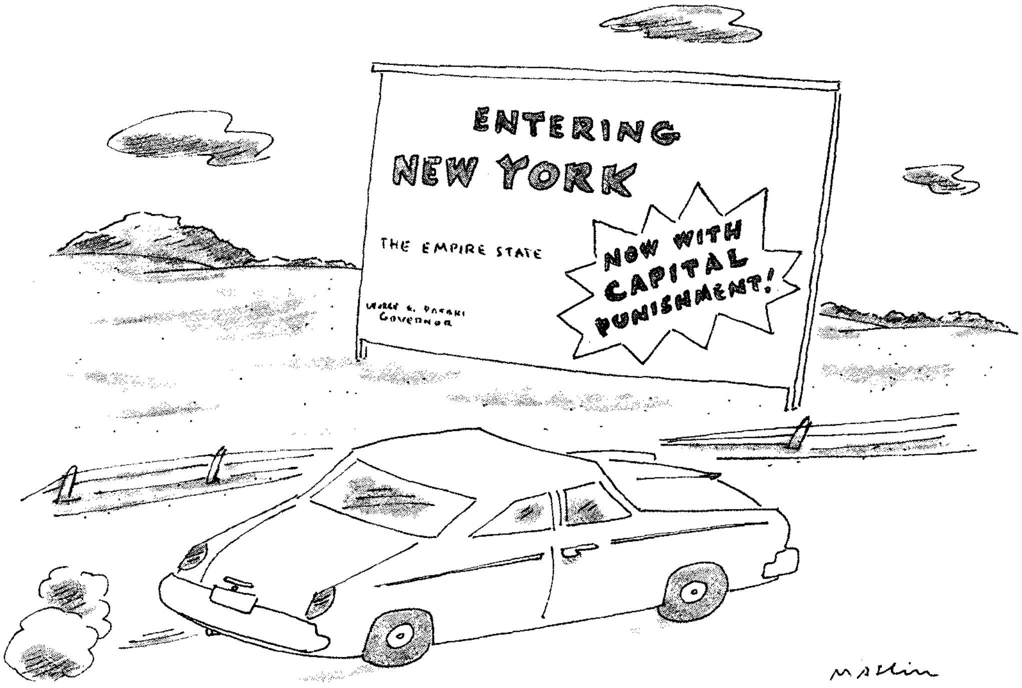
In the city, the two of them would go from one smoky club to another. For a time, Alice was in love with him, and he was charmed by her. In one very dark club, as she sat in a booth, long white fingers entangled in the enamelled necklace of Queen Tiy, Latouche returned from the lavatory and presented her with the chain to the toilet. She often wore this chain, usually wound around a ruby-and-emerald necklace. I don't think she ever dared offend her earlier self, Queen Tiy, with so flippant an ornament.

ALICE brought the Sitwells into my life. Edith and Osbert stayed with her in the country. They were not royalty in exile so much as true monarchs who had come from over the seas to claim their rightful kingdom. Osbert was publishing volume after volume of rococo memoirs, while Edith's "Canticle of the Rose" was on the coffee table of everyone in the world who knew—and knows no longer—what was fashionable in poetry or prose. Today they would have not a book but a videocassette of the latest Peter Greenaway movie.

Whenever I was in London, I'd lunch with Edith at the Sesame Club in Grosvenor Street. Among the colonials, Edith was capable of saying such astonishing things as "Ah, Lady Macbeth! An ancestress of mine," while Osbert would look shyly Plantagenet. But in London, surrounded by military-looking ladies at her club for gentlewomen, she was a cozy figure despite her six-foot frame, flowing robes, huge rings on long alabaster fingers, pendant slabs of jade hung from ears, and golden snakes entwined to form a crown in thin tea-colored hair.

I would arrive to find Edith enthroned in the lounge as the military ladies, one by one, marched up to pay her tribute: to each she gave a winning girlish smile while whispering to me, "This one we call the field marshal." A figure with bobbed hair, in sensible shoes, with swagger stick—if there was not a swagger stick there should have been one—bowed low over Edith's hand. "Dame Edith," the gruff voice saluted her.

Edith responded with gay girlish giggles. Then the field marshal went off to war, and Edith said, "Now, I *know* that you Americans always want a drink of something before lunch—something light for me, of course. What was that lovely drink that Osbert and I became so



fond of in New York? Something amusing and—I think—Italian . . ."

A waitress appeared with a small goldfish bowl: "Here's your Martini, Dame Edith."

Edith's last years were alcoholic but not too oppressive until she began to fall and break those Gothic bones. But in the fifties she was still a splendid companion. "We shall have a *red* lunch. I have no money, you know. It all goes for lunch here." She would not let me pay. The red lunch was always lobster and strawberries and a bottle apiece of red Burgundy.

Toward the end of one splendid lunch we discussed the "Lady Chatterley" case. Lawrence's novel was being prosecuted for obscenity and most of literary London was in court defending the novel and condemning censorship. "*We* never forgave Lawrence, of course. He based a character in that book on poor Osbert and we had been so kind to him."

"Actually," I said, the wine working its way into my brain, "Lawrence did *not* write 'Lady Chatterley's Lover.' It was entirely Truman Capote's work. You can tell from the style, and, of course, the dates," I added, in a burst of creative scholarship, "conform."

"Really!" Edith mulled this over. Then, slowly, she nodded. "Yes. How stupid of me not to have seen it all along. There are so many clues, aren't there?"

"Far more than 'Finnegans Wake.' "

"Far, far more, but now this means that we must strike quickly before the case is decided." She summoned a waitress. "Paper, pen, quickly." Tiny red-rimmed eyes gazed into mine. "These girls think that I am about to write a poem. Little do they suspect."

Pen and paper were placed in front of her. "Shall I write directly to the judge?"

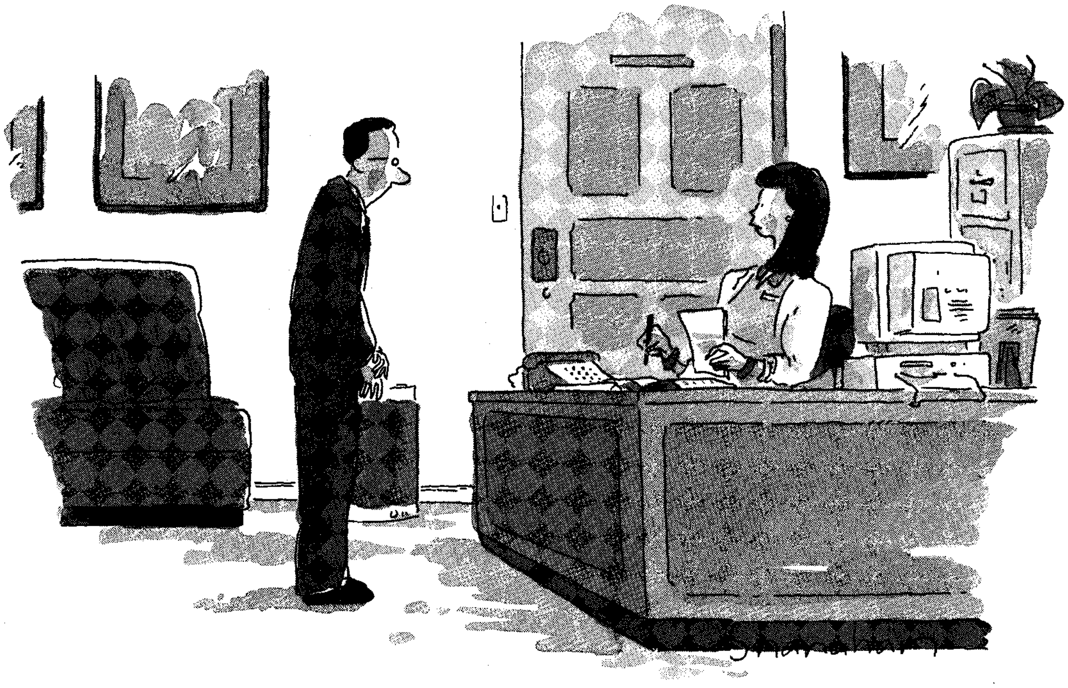
"No." I was firm. "Write the editor of the *Times*."

"Whole hog, then?" Edith began to talk as she wrote. "Dear sir, I am a little girl of seventy-four and I have it, on the best authority, that the actual author of 'Lady Chatterley's Lover'. . ." I remember her best like that, in a pool of light in a corner of the Sesame Club dining room.

Alice Bouverie and John Latouche both died, a month apart, in 1956. In each case, murder was hinted at. Latouche died of a heart attack in a Vermont cabin with a boyfriend. Pains in the night. Always the autodidact, he immediately got out a medical encyclopedia and diagnosed himself. The friend wanted to go to the nearest house with a telephone and ring for a doctor, but Latouche thought the spell was passing. He was also enthralled by the medical description of what he was going through. The friend went to sleep. When he woke up the next morning, Latouche was still seated on the bed, encyclopedia open on his lap, dead. A small amount of blood on the floor gave rise to his mother's accusation of foul play. I am sure there was none. Everyone was most impressed that the page he was reading was exactly the right one for someone suffering from an arterial embolism nourished by too much brandy and too many cigarettes. He was not yet forty.

A LITERARY biographer said recently that the one period in American literature in which he would have liked most to live was the fifties at Barrytown and its surrounding countryside along the Hudson, which includes Bard College. Mary McCarthy taught for a time at Bard, where she assembled that nosegay of deadly nightshade, the novel "The Groves of Academe," later to be countered by Randall Jarrell's equally witty "Pictures from an Institution," in which Mary is satirized satirizing Bard. The political journalist Richard Rovere also lived nearby, in Rhinebeck. Best of all, for me, there was F. W. Dupee, with his wife and two children, in a handsome old house called Wildercliff. Saul Bellow and Ralph Ellison shared a house not far away. I recall now that even in the idlest conversation the amicable Ralph would introduce the "Negro situation." Fred Dupee rang me one day. "I've just been over to Saul and Ralph's house." Whenever Fred said the two names together he would speak in careful italics, as if they were a couple of the sort whose name none dared more than whisper in those furtive days. "Ralph was planting flowers out front. I made the mistake of asking him what they were. He gave me a withering look. '*African* daisies,' he said."

Perhaps the only time that an American university could be said to be a legitimate center of culture was Columbia in the years just after the Second War. Richard Chase, F. W. Dupee, Lionel Trilling, Andrew Chiappe, Mark Van Doren,

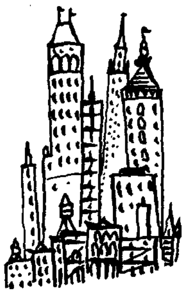


"You're at the top of the list, Mr. Stewart, and you'll be immediately notified the moment there's an available womb for you to crawl back into."

Jacques Barzun, and even Gilbert Highet made the place interesting not only for undergraduates like Kerouac and Ginsberg but for anyone who wished to participate in what Barzun, too neatly perhaps, called "the long conversation," as good a definition of civilization (intellectual division) as one is apt to get. I suppose that Harvard at the time of William James, Peirce, and Santayana might have been as interesting.

So it was, quite by accident—the accident being my friendship with Alice—that I found myself at the geographic center of as lively a group as our culture had to offer. As I recall, Fred Dupee came into my life the year that Alice died. He was the most charming of men, with a wit that generally slipped unnoticed past most of the Hudsonites, including the teacher-writers. He was of middle height, with Kerouac-blue eyes, thick gray hair parted in the middle, and the most elegant manners of anyone who had made the quantum leap from Joliet, Illinois (home of the penitentiary), to the Yale of Rudy Vallee to the Communist Party to the heights of Columbia. Despite Fred's time as a Communist, he was apolitical. He no longer took seriously the politics of the day; he also had little interest in the politics of old days—that is, history. He was fascinated by aesthetics. He could discourse on the correct attire for the Yale undergraduate of 1930 just as easily as he could on a close reading of Milton, whose bust brooded over the Wildercliff drawing room. Fred at work on a text was a joy to anyone who thinks criticism can be a high literary art and not simply a mechanistic process for the production of theory.

My most intensive period as a reader coincided with meeting Fred, himself self-taught in the sense that he had no Ph.D. and never truly joined the English Department trade union, which tended, doggedly, to narrow, if not to deepen, the mind through specialization. I never heard him lecture, but I am told he filled the hall. He could range easily from Shakespeare to James, for whom he had a deep affinity, somewhat exacerbated by the presence nearby—but, for him, so far away—of the river-road families who figure in James as well as in Wharton. Fred's obsession with these characters was more than balanced by Saul Bellow's loathing for them, particularly for Saul's landlord, Chanler Chapman, son of John Jay Chapman. Chanler was very much lord of the manor to the writer-teachers who surrounded him. With Saul, he was very lordly indeed, as Saul lived in one of the tenant cottages on the Chapman estate. The rows between thick-skinned master and mutinous serf gave us all joy; later, they gave those able to read equal joy when Saul turned Chanler into his finest invention, "Henderson the Rain King." Saul also made wine from berries.



I could never tell Saul's wives apart. He seemed always to be married to—or accompanied by—a new variation on some, for him, Platonic-model woman, with a tendency to nag: "Of course you forgot to pick up the yogurt after I *especially* asked you to . . ."

Saul wrote close to life in a way that ought to have limited his work, but somehow he could transcend a great deal of forgotten yogurt—yet never forgot that the yogurt is essential to a story, one of those "human fringes" as Edith Wharton remarked to James, that "we necessarily trail after us through life," and that she had found sadly missing in "The Golden Bowl." Stricken, James maintained that they *were* there.

Fred and his wife brought Lionel and Diana Trilling to Edgewater. Lionel was pale, with dark-rimmed eyes like a shy nocturnal raccoon; Diana was proud, opinionated. We had drinks in what we called the Green Room (painted dark green, that is—a nontheatrical term), on the south side of the house. I was polite, as a host must be. Lionel seemed truly pleased that I admired his political novel "The Middle of the Journey." On the other hand, anyone who could write a book about E. M. Forster and not be aware of his intense, almost religious, faggotry is not much in the way of a critic.

Diana's book chat for *The Nation* had plainly gone to her head, as one discovered in her recent memoir. Apparently, people, the *right* people, now admired her, she confesses. . . . Publishers took her to lunch. Later, she would distinguish herself with an inadvertently hilarious piece called "The Other Night at Columbia" when, after a fine introduction by Fred, Allen Ginsberg gave a reading, obliging Diana to meditate on the difference between the Beat barbarians and those high-culture figures who had really made it, like Lionel and herself. For many years, whenever I would ring Fred, I'd say, in a thundering bass voice, "Fred! This is *Diana. Diana Trilling*." And Fred would respond in his most gravely courteous manner, "Why, Diana, how good of you to call. I was just reading again your review of 'The Man in the Gray Flannel Suit.' It holds up so well. No, really. I mean it. It is like Matthew Arnold."

In the Green Room, Saul Bellow merrily greeted Lionel. "Still peddling the same old horseshit?" In due course, Saul broke with New York and retreated to Chicago. Although Chicago is a better city to live in, I've never understood his disaffection for the New York literary scene, whose prince he was. The Jewish literary establishment wanted a great writer. They picked him; and he left town. But then he has always had universalist tendencies.

After my novel "Messiah" failed in 1954, I went into television. Grimly, I vowed that in five years I would make enough money to keep me for the rest of my life. As it turned out, five years became ten. I went from television to M-G-M as a screenwriter. From there to Broadway, where I had two successful plays in a row. From time to time I had the impression that the teacher-writers in my neighborhood were ill disposed toward me. Some things are simply not done. Success on Broadway was one of those things, and Mary McCarthy, in a fit of savage envy, the dark side to that otherwise bright intelligent nature, gave the game away when she wrote an attack on Tennessee in *Partisan Review* and called it, unconscious of what she was revealing about herself, "A Streetcar Called Success."

ON February 15, 1954, I spent the day at the CBS television studio on New York City's Tenth Avenue. The studio had once been a legitimate theatre; now its gutted interior was a complex of cables, wires, hanging lights, crude bulky cameras on go-carts. High up, where the first gallery had been, was the control room. Through plate-glass windows the director and his crew could survey not only the entire floor of the theatre, divided up into realistic sets for tonight's play, but they could see, on a row of monitors, what each of the three cameras was recording down below. A central monitor would show the program; images quickly switched from camera to camera would edit the play, my first for "live" television, and as the play was being acted, it was also being transmitted. In effect, photographed theatre. The program, "Studio One," sponsored by Westinghouse, presented a new play every Monday evening.

AP/WIDE WORLD

Air day began early, with a technical run-through. For the first time, the actors saw the sets and the cameras saw the actors. We had been rehearsing for a week on Second Avenue, across from the kosher restaurant Ratner's, in a building owned by a Ukrainian organization. As I had seen a great many movies, three members of the cast were well known to me. There was the aging Bramwell Fletcher. In "The Mummy" he had played the archeologist who first sees the mummy come to life, and dies laughing hysterically. "The Mummy" 's leading man was David Manners, whose father was the editor at E. P. Dutton who had assured me that my reputation would not survive the publication of my third novel, "The City and the Pillar," in 1948. As of 1954, he was right. I had been obliged to retreat to television. But, like General MacArthur, I knew that I would return. Of course, no one believed me, because once a serious writer had sold out . . . Look at Clifford Odets, they would say. I did. I thought he'd found himself in Hollywood. But in those days there was much solemn talk of selling out, of commercialism versus art. Actually, there was not much in the way of art in the American literary world, then or now, while even a commercialite found it hard to make a living in television, where I was paid something like seven hundred dollars for an hour-long play that had, admittedly, taken me only four days to write.

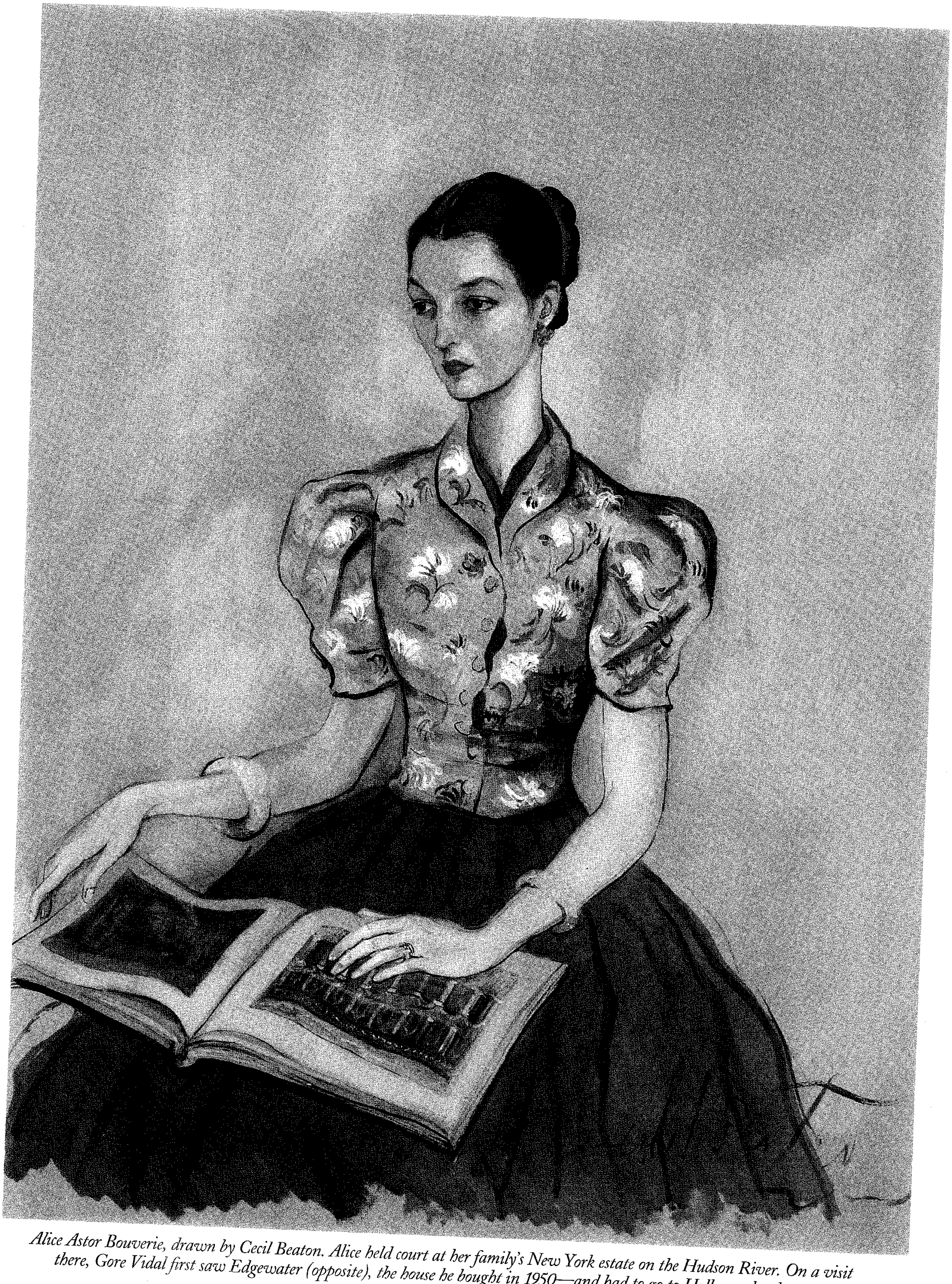
The producer of "Studio One" was Felix Jackson, a refugee from Nazi Germany who had been married to Deanna Durbin, a child soprano and competitor of Judy Garland, whose imitations of her rival were marvellously cruel, involving a crooked arm and a radiant mad smile to match luminous crossed eyes. But Garland could be equally mordant about herself. When she had made her triumphant comeback at the Palladium in London, inspired by merry Schadenfreude she rang her now forgotten rival. After many delays and false starts, Garland got the sleepy, ill-tempered Durbin at home in the French countryside. "Tonight I had the greatest audience of my life!" At length, Judy recounted her triumph. Finally, out of breath, she stopped. There was a long silence. Then a pitying voice said, "Are you *still* in that asshole business?"

Now I was in it. I had come across one of the earliest recorded stories of dual personality in turn-of-the-century New England. Geraldine Fitzgerald was the lady possessed in "Dark Possession," the somewhat hokey title of the piece. Barbara O'Neil, Scarlett O'Hara's mother in "Gone with the Wind," played Geraldine's sister, and the part of a young doctor was played by Leslie Nielsen.

I usually rewrote down to air day. This was hard on the actors, but it did improve the play. Later, when I worked in films, I was astonished to find that the writer was not allowed to attend the first reading or, in any way ever again, see to his script. Yet only when the writer hears the actors say what he has written can he tell what is wrong. He can also adjust dialogue to fit an actor's particular talent, the way a composer writes for a specific musical instrument.

I spent the entire day at the studio. Franklin Schaffner was a good workmanlike director; later he would direct my film (not *his*, as I told the shocked French at Cannes) "The Best Man." I remember Barbara O'Neil, in costume, sitting very straight on the set of the gloomy Victorian dining room next to a bowl of yellow mimosa: "If I couldn't sit here quietly smelling the mimosa, I would start to scream." For actors on live television, normal stage fright was exaggerated by the knowledge that twenty million people would be watching them and that should they go up on their lines, learned in less than a week, no more television work. There were many terrible stories of actors who had gone berserk on camera. I watched one ethereal blond girl, in the course of a tender love scene, soundlessly vomit onto her swain. Harrowing as all this was, the forced flow of adrenaline made for highly concentrated performances, and it is no surprise that our generation of actors, writers, and directors went on to dominate the movies for forty years.

I have just watched a tape of a kinescope, as the film of a live program is called, of "Dark Possession." The play still seems curiously spontaneous, but one can see, up close, that Canadian-cool Leslie is sweating like a prizefighter in the New England winter, while Barbara's lips quiver as she suffers mimosa withdrawal. The play went smoothly until the first commercial, which was also done live. In a dramatically—even reverently—lit corner of the studio theatre there was a special chapel for the Westinghouse refrigerator, for which we toiled. The high priestess-saleswoman Betty Furness was absent that evening, and her place had been



FROM THE COLLECTION OF IVAN OBOLENSKY

Alice Astor Bouverie, drawn by Cecil Beaton. Alice held court at her family's New York estate on the Hudson River. On a visit there, Gore Vidal first saw Edgewater (opposite), the house he bought in 1950—and had to go to Hollywood to keep up.

taken by a young actress, who briskly described the virtues of the refrigerator. "And it all works so easily. You just *press* the *magic* button . . ." She pressed the button. Nothing happened. Close shot of actress's panicky face. Then, as she gabbled incoherently, the sound of a crowbar prying open the door. On cue now, she turned, pressed the button and, like a lover come home from who knows what crusade, the door fell into her waiting arms. The next day the story was given a big play in the press. There was no mention of the night's program.

Today, I received in the mail the obituary of Betty Furness. Freezing April day. Rain and wind. The vet has just announced that my cat has skin cancer in both ears. General gloom. Ralph Ellison has also died. This seems to happen with alarming frequency whenever I mention anyone in this text. I hope I haven't done in Allen Ginsberg.

"Dark Possession" was counted a success, and I wrote a couple of dozen plays over the next two years. For the first time I had the money to fix up Edgewater. I was also being written off as any sort of novelist. There might have been a certain sad prestige had I failed in television, but to have been successful was a sign of a fundamental flaw.

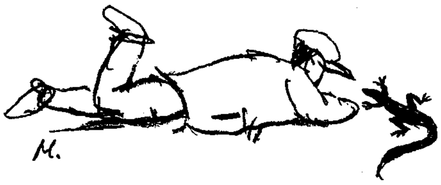
Along with original plays, I adapted two Faulkner short stories, "Barn Burning" and "Smoke." I knew Faulkner slightly. After one of the plays, we ran into each other at the corner of Fifth Avenue and Forty-seventh Street. A dapper little man in a tweed jacket, he enjoyed talking kin with me, as the Gores lived just north of his home town, Oxford. Apparently, my great-aunt Mary Gore Wyatt had taught—or tried to teach—him Latin.

"I don't have the television," he said, in his courtly way, "but some of the family do, and they told me they liked the play very much. I wrote one for the television too, not long ago, but I don't think it was very good, or so they say. I never watch." When I said that I was going out to Hollywood, under contract to M-G-M, he frowned. "Well, of course, the money is very good and we have to live, but I would advise you never to take the movies seriously. It's not worth it. Scott Fitzgerald made that mistake, and it did him a lot of harm. Just go. Do the work. And then go home and write what you should be writing." For a man famous for taciturnity, Faulkner was always very talkative with me on the few occasions that we met.

Unfortunately, I did take the movies seriously, and if it did me no harm, it certainly tested my temper. In television and on Broadway, the writer was, as he always is, the *auteur*, to use the French word for what the *Cahiers du Cinéma* has assured us that the—any—movie director is. But for me, in those days, a director was simply a technician hired to serve the play and its writer, while even in the Hollywood of forty years ago the writer and the director were both secondary to the producer.

First trip to Hollywood as a scriptwriter. I stayed at the Chateau Marmont hotel, where I met Paul Newman and Joanne Woodward by the small oval pool. "Like a navel filled with sweat," Walter Slezak, the rotund Austrian actor, said that I said. There were several bungalows around the pool. Nick Ray lived in one, preparing "Rebel Without a Cause" and rather openly having an affair with the adolescent Sal Mineo, while the sallow Jimmy Dean skulked in and out, unrecognizable behind thick glasses that distorted myopic eyes. He too had come from television, from what was already being called "the golden age," which puts me in mind of Randall Jarrell's comment that no matter how golden an age is, there will always be someone who complains that everything looks too yellow. Anyway, we all worked in it. At first my writer-writer friends were disdainful; then, one by one, they asked me, furtively, could I get them in touch with an agent or a producer? Even Jimmy Baldwin got me to introduce him to the story editor of "Studio One." Meanwhile, as my plays appeared in quick succession, Latouche said, rather sourly, "Whoever suspected that you would be the Lope de Vega of television?"

Paul had already made one film, as had Joanne. He was still married to his first wife, by whom he had had three children. Joanne was now waiting for him to free himself and marry her. They had met in a play by William Inge called "Picnic." Bill was a "recovering" alcoholic newspaperman who had had a brief affair with Tennessee. As a result of observing the Bird (as I called Tennessee) at work, Bill decided that playwriting was obviously a very easy thing to do. He then wrote five successful plays in a row, something of a record, enraging the Bird. "La Belle," as he called him, "cannot fail."



All in all, it was very agreeable to be young and involved in the movie business at this time; that is, it was agreeable for us, the last contract players and writers, less agreeable for the studios. Within a decade the whole system would break down and the once all-powerful studios would simply rent space to the now independent producers, who made fewer and fewer movies.

That winter Paul and Joanne and Howard and I took a house together in the Malibu Beach colony. Each had a small car. Paul left for Warners at dawn, as that studio was in the far, faraway San Fernando Valley. I left second, to drive to M-G-M in Culver City. Finally, Joanne made her leisurely way to Twentieth Century Fox in nearby Beverly Hills. Weekends, the house was full of people whom, often, none of us knew. Each morning, at dawn, a beagle who lived to the north of the colony started his long march to the south, collecting all the other dogs on the way. The beagle was an inspired and inspiring leader, and our black spaniel always rushed out to join his legion. The dogs vanished for the day. We never knew where they went. But then, at sundown, exhausted, each came home.

Dogs. Our first spaniel was split in two at Edgewater, on the tracks, by a New York Central train. Then Joanne gave us two puppies, one black and one blond. The blond was a hermaphrodite who died early. The male lived on for many gluttonous years, ending his days when, late one night, eating bones on the balcony of the Grand Hotel in Florence, he fell to the Lungarno, where we found him the next morning. Harold Acton liked to pretend that we then went to his villa, La Pietra, at the edge of Florence. "And of course you know how Gore is," he would hum in his Chinese-Italian mandarin English. "He asked did I mind if he buried his dog on the property." In fact, we buried the black spaniel not at Harold's villa but in the woods back of the good Vernon Bartlett's house near Lucca.

The Newmans presented us with a third dog in 1970. Rat lived for thirteen years, a slightly lopsided Australian terrier of great intelligence. He was at his peak during the five winters that we spent in Klosters, Switzerland. He enchanted our neighbor Greta Garbo, and she would come by the flat each morning to walk me and Rat (she called him Ratzski, as "Rat is so brutal a name").

UNDER NEW MANAGEMENT
EVERYBODY MUST GO!

At sixty-five, Garbo was still very beautiful—that is, she still looked like Garbo. She had two voices. One, she used when she spoke Swedish or German, a somewhat high voice with an odd two-syllable cry for emphasis: *Aie-ee!* The other was her low, "manly" voice, the one that she used on the screen. She always referred to herself as "he." She liked dressing up in my clothes. I think she saw herself as a boy with another boy. She also had an eye for girls and once, on a walk beside the Silvretta River, she asked Irwin Shaw's girlfriend to show her her breasts, which she did. Garbo praised them but no more. Garbo's own hung very low. "I never wore a bra. I was the original women's liberation."

One winter morning I went with her to the magazine stand at the railroad station, where she would buy all the movie-gossip magazines. Debra Paget and Fabian were familiar names to her. But on this occasion she, not either of them, was cover girl. Cecil Beaton had written about the "love affair" between him and Garbo. With frozen face, she bought all the magazines and, without a word, went quickly home, leaving me and Ratzski to read the Italian version of the love affair that, she assured me later, never took place. "And people think I am *pair*-annoyed," she observed with a scowl. Beaton did tell one story that sounded like her. He was complaining how, with age, his genitals were growing smaller. She had replied, sadly, "I wish that I could say the same."

Garbo was romantic but not sentimental. One day she told me that she had just got a message from Stockholm. The King was dying. When he was crown prince, he had come for lunch at the commissary at M-G-M and she, as the Swedish queen of the movies, sat next to him. "They made me wear a hat like a plate that kept slipping off. That's the only time I ever saw him. Now they say he has always been in love with me and will I come see him before he dies."

This was M-G-M dialogue at its greatest. It was also Garbo at her most characteristic.

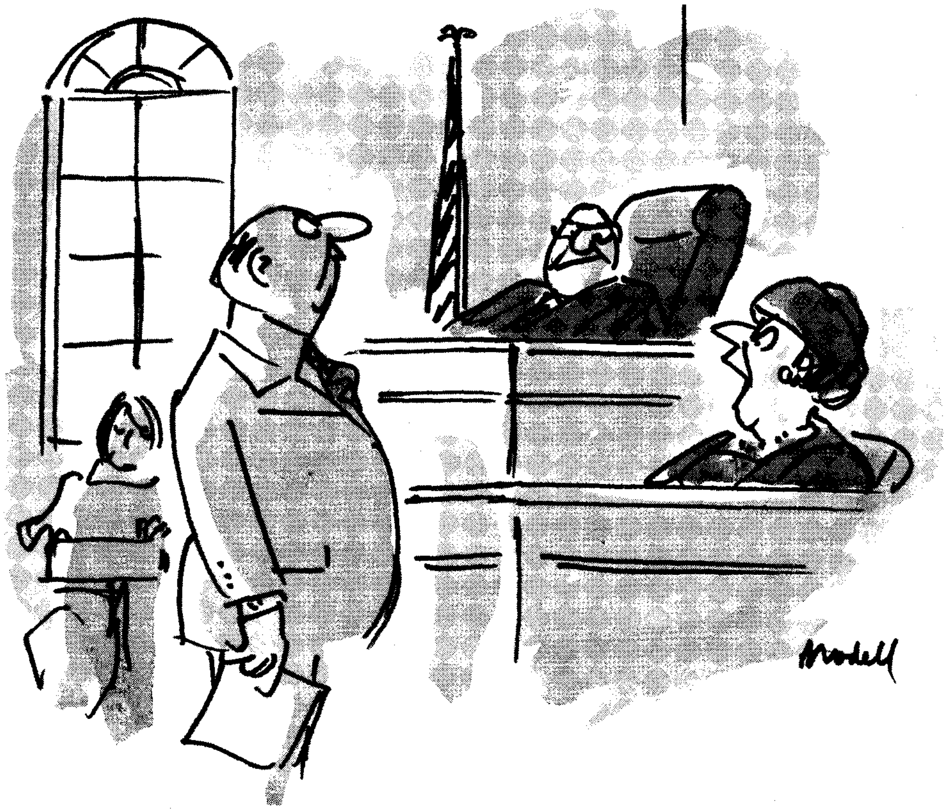
"You must go."

"So far to go, and for what? He'll die anyway."

That night I produced caviar and vodka for her. We were joined by Irwin Shaw, who asked if he could bring Martha Gellhorn, a journalist I admired. Gellhorn talked non-stop for several hours as Garbo grew more and more withdrawn. Suddenly, Gellhorn left. "How she hates me," said Garbo, now wearing Howard's blazer, which, come to think of it, she forgot to return. Irwin and I assured her that Gellhorn did not hate her, but Garbo was not convinced. The next day, in the street, Gellhorn came up to me. "I want to apologize for last night. I couldn't stop rattling. But what else do you do when you finally meet Helen of Troy?"

I repeated this to Garbo, who rewarded me with one of her most beautiful expressions, head flung back, the long swanlike curve of the neck still beautiful, ice-gray eyes, hooded, downturned lips painted a luminous pale pink, which "Perc Westmore invented just for me." Garbo was pleased. "That was nice of her to say. But of course, I never played Helen of Troy."

For five years we saw her every winter when she came to Klosters to be with Salka Viertel, her closest friend. Then Salka died. I tried to get Garbo to come to Ravello, but she feared the paparazzi. I told her how to get rid of them forever: "Hold a press conference. Everyone will be there. From every country. Then announce that you are producing and starring in a television series. About a Swedish maid who holds together an American family. Then, a year later, hold another press conference. There will be fewer journalists. Hold a third



"How come only lawyers get to object?"

• •

. . . and no one will bother you again."

"I don't think," said Queen Christina, "that that is very funny."

But she was very funny about her visit to the Kennedys in the White House. Early on, Jackie had told me, "One of the few nice things about being here is we can get to meet everyone we've ever wanted to meet." So, inevitably, Garbo came to dinner. "The President took me into his bedroom. So romantic. Then he gave me a whale's tooth and we went back to Mrs. *Jah*-kee, who said, 'He never gave *me* a whale's tooth.' "

JACKIE and I first met in 1949, at the house of a friend in Washington. I knew that my stepfather, Hugh Auchincloss, had acquired two stepdaughters after my mother divorced him and he remarried. Characteristically, I had forgotten their names. Jackie was very curious about me: "After all, I moved into your room."

In 1956, we saw each other regularly. We'd lunch together at the Plaza. Since Jackie was fascinated by Hollywood and movie stars, I took her to a rehearsal of what would be my next-to-last play for television, "Honor." She watched as the assistant director, Dominick Dunne, on hands and knees, put down tapes to denote the sets.

"I'd love to act," she said suddenly as we drank coffee from plastic cups and watched the actors rehearsing at the far end of the hall. "Do you think it's too late?"

"Isn't what's happening to you now a lot more interesting?"

"For Jack it is." She frowned. "Not for me. I never see him. He's so busy with . . ." She seldom complained about Jack himself, but she was irritated by the family's rules and regulations. "I wanted this small car, a Thunderbird. I mean, what could be more *American*?" The mischievous smile. "But Mr. Kennedy said, 'Kennedys drive Buicks.' So I drive a Buick. How do you go about getting a job acting?"

I was amused. "You mean how do *you* go about it? Well, just for the novelty of it, I'm sure any of the studios would cast you. At least once. What would Jack say?"

"Oh, he loves actors . . ." She was vague. "It's Mr. Kennedy who would be the problem. He used to own a movie studio and he hates actors."

"Except for Gloria Swanson and . . ." I named a number of actresses he was known to have had affairs with. She shrugged that off. Would I show her around the New York theatre world?

We went, with Howard, to Downey's, a place on Eighth Avenue frequented by actors. She was much stared at. She was easily the most glamorous woman in the restaurant, though hardly the prettiest. This was the era of the Actors Studio and the celebration not only of the Freudian inner life but also of the lower middle class, who, in the age of Eisenhower, dominated the television screen. Although these supposedly simple folk were sometimes sad when kitchen appliances or other consumer goods were not affordable, they were, all in all, very happy to be humble and, above all, American. Paddy Chayefsky was their television interpreter and he had a perfect ear for proletarian speech. I was content to be, in those days, Trigorin to his Chekhov. Also, I was literally eccentric in that I never wrote about the "little people." I'd go from Civil War to the New Mexico territory to mock-science fiction. I did not write about the people Paddy knew until I went to M-G-M and, as my first picture, adapted one of his pieces, "The Catered Affair." In later years he was always annoyed when the British would refer reverently to his masterpiece "Wedding Breakfast" (the U.K. title), and he would give me full bitter credit for it. In time we became friends, but at first he was—pointlessly, I thought—resentful of my presence on the scene. Recently, I asked the director Sidney Lumet why. Sidney grinned his Halloween-pumpkin smile: "You weren't Jewish, and this was our game."

At Downey's, when actors asked who Jackie was, I'd say, "It's the new girl at Warners." This seemed to satisfy them.

Even as a girl, Jackie liked to be photographed in various roles and moods. Jack, in the interest of advancing his career, created hers by warning her never to talk in public and never to write letters, at least to strangers. Ruefully, she told me how "I write the most brilliant letters, to these dreadful journalists, and I show them to Jack, and he says, 'Oh, that's really great. Now go tear it up.' "

Through necessity (and the lack of opportunities for a woman of her time and place), Jackie's life was dedicated to acquiring money through marriage, just as her mother had done before her and my mother before her mother, to the same rich man. She had lost her virginity to a friend of mine on Paris's Left Bank. He came from a better family than hers, as we used, quaintly, to say, but he had no money. He was also Protestant. He told me that, later, when they discussed marriage, she said no. A fellow Roman Catholic, also on the make for glory if not money, had come her way. Jack had the income from a ten-million-dollar trust fund. Adequate income at the time, but hardly the amount that she would later need to live like her role model, Bunny Mellon. Jack needed a Catholic bride because of his political career; also, and even better, thanks to the Auchincloss association, Jackie was, in the eyes of the Kennedys, a member of the old Protestant patriciate that they intended to erase.

When she told her lover that she was going to marry Jack, he was appalled.

"What on earth is going to become of you in that awful world?"

"Read," she said, "the newspapers."

Although the Kennedys would never have allowed her to act in the movies as she wanted to do in 1956, she finessed them all by becoming the equivalent of a movie star—and, best of all, a silent star of unmade films, her face on every magazine cover almost to the end. The later marriage to Aristotle Onassis was cold-blooded but necessary. Actually, Ari was more charming and witty than she, and in the glittering European circus where, to her credit, she did not particularly want to shine, the word was "What on earth does he see in her?"

Jackie had always said to me that her aim in life was "to be attractive to men"; this was later modified to being a successful mother as well. Louis Auchincloss noted that Jackie had known exactly what she wanted and how to get it. She was a good deal tougher than any of the Kennedys, particularly "those toothy girls," as she mockingly referred to her sisters-in-law. She had had the good sense to make her one alliance within the family to old Joe, the autocrat with the money, who doted on her. I think that eventually she became fond of Jack. She had always accepted his promiscuity as perfectly normal, as indeed it was in the high-powered world.

One evening at a charity ball, Jackie said, "I've put you at Jack's table. There's a new import from England, wonderfully stupid but very beautiful, and she'll sit between you and Jack and you two can talk across her." In the current sick wave of hypocrisy about sex in politics and the absolute necessity for perfect monogamy, Jackie was a throwback to the eighteenth century. My sister and I often argue about whether she was at all erotic, or did money rule her passions to the exclusion of all else?

I suspect that the one person she ever loved, if indeed she was capable of such an emotion, was Bobby Kennedy. There was always something oddly intense in her voice when she mentioned him to me, and, as it turned out, the mutual dislike between Bobby and me ended my friendship with Jackie, a good thing, all in all, as I was not designed to play attendant lord.

By the spring of 1958, M-G-M was in bad shape financially. Between the popularity of television and a general falling off of the movie audience, the studios were like so many dinosaurs faced with a dramatic change in the weather.

Sam Zimbalist called me to his office. He was a tall man with a wen on the side of his neck. He had a trick of suddenly opening wide and then half shutting his eyes. Joe Mankiewicz used to do the same thing. It was a trick that they had picked up from the legendary macho Vic Fleming, one of the many directors of "Gone with the Wind." Sam smoked large cigars. Drank milk filled with cream every day. He was devoted to his wife, Mary. "The studio wants me to make 'Ben-Hur' right away." I groaned. I had gone on suspension the year before, when I was asked to write yet another version of what had been, in the silent era, the studio's most successful film. Since then, there had been at least a dozen scripts for a talking version. The last two had been written, respectively, by Maxwell Anderson and S. N. Behrman, two popular playwrights of the day. "I've got Willy Wyler. He'll join us soon as he finishes that Western of his." Eyes widen, then narrow. "We're thinking about your friend Paul Newman for Ben-Hur." Cigar smoke between us.

"You'll never get him." Thanks to a man called Turnupseed who was driving the car into which James Dean had smashed his Porsche, Paul had replaced Dean as the lead in "Somebody Up There Likes Me" and was now a star.

"Why not? It's the biggest role there is in town."

I explained that after Paul's first movie, a disastrous Roman affair called "The Silver Chalice," he had sworn never to act in a cocktail dress again.

"Will you write it?" Sam's powers of persuasion were great. My resistance to this story was equally great, but eventually Sam and I came to an agreement. I would go to Rome with him and Willy. I would stay three months, in which time I could, he knew, give him a draft. In exchange for this, the studio would let me out of my contract. This suited me perfectly. A revised contract was sent to my office. I signed it and gave it back to the messenger, a good-looking boy, smart as paint, as they used to say. Years later Jack Nicholson reminded me of our first encounter.

Sam and Mary Zimbalist, William Wyler, and I took the overnight SAS flight from New York to Rome. Wyler had finally read the script, a compilation of Anderson and Behrman, written mostly in Anderson's elevated poetic style. "This is awful." Willy presented me with his nondeaf ear, always a sign that he was alert and troubled.

"You hadn't read it before?"

"Never. My God." He was silent. Sam and Mary were at the other end of the lounge. There were, in those gracious times, overhead beds that came down when one wanted to sleep, rather like the Pullman trains of long ago. Hard to imagine that commercial flying could ever have been pleasurable.

"What," said Willy at last, "does a Roman unbuckle when he sits down?" Then he quizzed me at length about ancient Rome. Although I was able to answer a number of his questions, my answers only pointed up his unease about the whole project. He had been given a million dollars to direct the film, the highest price, as of that date, for a director. Casting had been a nightmare. Universal would not lend out Rock Hudson,

COLLECTION OF GORE VIDAL

Gore Vidal and Tennessee Williams being photographed by Jack Kennedy in Palm Beach in 1958. Tennessee thought the Presidential candidate "far too attractive for the American people."

second choice after Newman. Then there was actually a genuine search for an unknown, which yielded no one. In desperation, Sam suggested Charlton Heston, who had worked in Willy's last film. Although Chuck had all the charm of a wooden Indian, Wyler had somehow got a good performance out of him as a villain in a Western. Willy liked to say, "I can't make a bad actor good, but I can keep a good actor from looking bad." But how was he to animate an entire lumberyard?

Glumly, M-G-M had hired Heston and, as Willy and I flew the Atlantic, the telephone-book-size script between us, Chuck was being costumed and Jerusalem was being built on the back lot of Rome's Cinecittà. What we had on our hands was, essentially, a silent movie with miles of windy dialogue.

Once in Rome, I started to write the script in an office next to Zimbalist's. While I wrote and Sam fretted, our *auteur* was watching every Roman movie ever made, not a good idea, I thought, but it was Willy's only way of getting the feel of the period—from other directors who had watched the work of other directors, all the way back to the *auteur* of *auteurs,* Cecil B. De Mille, who knew nothing about Rome either. The only "accurate" Roman film that I've ever seen—in appearance, that is—was "The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire," perfect junk, but with a great set designer, who knew what the city had looked like at the time of Marcus Aurelius, played by Alec Guinness, "in all these flowing robes," as he put it, "and swirling clichés."

I was swirling quite a few clichés myself. The story line is confusing, to say the least. Two boyhood friends meet as adults. One is a Zionist Jew; the other, a Roman officer. Their reunion is affectionate; then they quarrel over politics; then they hate each other until one kills the other in a chariot race an eternity of movie time later. "There is," I said to Sam and Willy, "no motivation for all this fury."

"That," said Sam, "is why you are here." We agreed that a political difference of opinion in one short scene was not enough to justify so great an enmity. Ben-Hur was no Zionist terrorist and Messala, played by Stephen Boyd, was no foreign oppressor. More to the point, audiences were less simple in the age of Freud than they had been in the age of the original author, General Lew Wallace, or even of the original "Ben-Hur" film, with Ramon Novarro.

Down the corridor from my office at Cinecittà was Federico Fellini, preparing "La Dolce Vita." Fred, as I called him (he called me Gorino), was fascinated to be next door, as it were, to an Epical Colossal Hollywood Film. Neither Sam nor Willy was willing to meet him, so I showed him around the back lot, where the great stadium of Antioch had been built, as well as attractive downtown Jerusalem.

Fred spoke of the sort of thing that he wanted to show about the "sweet life" of postwar Rome. Of course, he was essentially a puritan and I a pagan. Even so, talking to him about grown-up matters, I got an idea that might just motivate the infantile story that I had been stuck with.

Sam was behind his desk; eyes narrowing and enlarging as he puffed on a large cigar, his normally ruddy face now an olive color—his heart was preparing to shut off. Willy, a small gray gnome, sat in a chair with his back to the window, the good ear turned disapprovingly in my direction. I had just told them that Ben-Hur and Messala had been boyhood lovers. But Ben-Hur, under the fierce Palestinian sun and its jealous god, had turned straight as a die while Messala, the decadent Gentile, had remained in love with Ben and wanted to take up where they had left off. Yes, it was "The City and the Pillar" all over again; fortunately, neither Sam nor Willy had read it. When Ben-Hur rebuffs Messala's advances, a deep and abiding hatred fills Messala to the brim. If not love (Rome spelled backward is "Amor"), then death. I would break the single inherited scene of the meeting and the quarrel into two parts. First, a sort of cryptic love scene; second, the rebuff, ostensibly over politics but actually over unreciprocated love. I doubt whether two Hollywood magnates, their studio faced with financial ruin, had ever been so con-founded by what they took to be one writer's mad perversity. When I finished, there was a long silence.

Finally, Willy: "Gore, this is 'Ben-Hur.' 'Ben-Hur'! 'A tale of the Christ' or whatever that subtitle is. You can't do this with 'Ben-Hur' . . ."

Sam's eyes were now shut. "How do you *show* this . . . uh, love affair?"

"By never mentioning it. There won't be a line of dialogue anyone can object to. It will all be in their reactions." I explained how, when Ben-Hur refuses to join Messala in supporting the Roman occupation, one can see in Messala's face that the issue is not politics but thwarted love.

Sam was nodding, as if in his sleep. Willy was looking a bit wild-eyed.

"Imagine the scene with Messala saying something like 'Remember, I *asked* you,' in such a way that the appeal will register at an unconscious level in most of the audience. They won't really know that this is the love that dare not screech its name, but they *will* grasp the fact that proud Messala is abasing himself before his old buddy."

Willy moaned; stood up; gave me his deaf ear. "Well, try it. I don't think it's possible, but anything is better than what we've got."

The next day I came in with the two scenes. Willy and I read as Sam listened. As we were required to do at M-G-M, no matter who the director was, I had written in all the "reaction shots"—expressions on each actor's face as he hears the other's dialogue. Willy said, "Tone down the offstage directions. I'll talk to Chuck. You talk to Boyd. But don't *you* say a word to Chuck or he'll fall apart." The thought of so much wood crashing to the ground committed us all to *omertà*. I did tell Boyd. The bright-blue eyes glittered happily. Yes, he knew exactly what to do. "I think there's a dog in the scene," he said. "I can be patting it while I'm getting turned down by old Ben."

During the reading of the scene, Chuck was imitating Francis X. Bushman in the silent-film version, tossing his head, chin held high, oblivious of what was going on. Boyd at one point winked at me. *He* was in character. After the boys left, Sam, Willy, and I said nothing for a long time. We were, to say the least, depressed. Finally, I said, "Chuck hasn't got much charm, has he?"

"No," said Willy, "and you can direct your ass off and he still won't have any."

The scene was duly shot, as written by me. Years later, after I had presented prizes to two writers at the Academy Awards, I ran into Willy backstage. "I loved that cover story on you in *Newsweek*," he said. "But why don't you ever mention 'Ben-Hur'?"

"Because I didn't get credit." Willy had appealed to the Writers' Guild that credit be given to Christopher Fry, who had stayed with him all through the shooting, a wretched business. The studio had wanted to shut down the production; then Sam died, and there was nothing but trouble to the end. Christopher reminded Willy that as I had written half or more of the script, I should be credited, too. But the Guild, with its secret arbiters, has always been famous for denying credit to those who actually write the scripts, preferring to assign credit to one of its own. In our case, this proved to be a former president of the Guild, who claimed that he had been mailing Sam pages from Hollywood. As Sam was dead, the Guild told Willy to mind his own business. Fry and I were both eliminated.

Backstage at the Dorothy Chandler Pavilion, Willy and I again discussed the love scene that opens the picture. Willy denied that we had ever discussed—much less made—anything so radical. Over the next few years, whenever we met, we quarrelled amiably over what I had put in the scene and what Stephen Boyd is clearly playing. But, finally, annoyed at Willy's party line, I said, "Let's watch the scene together and I'll show you what's going on up there on the screen."

Willy affected not to hear. "Funny about that picture. I was a great favorite of the *Cahiers du Cinéma* until 'Ben-Hur.' After that, they never mentioned my name again." He gave me his twisted grin, a most ambivalent one, indicating that it might have been my secret sabotage that had undone him.

I was soothing. "You did the best you could with what you had."

I never knew what he really thought of the picture, which, despite its financial success and numerous prizes, should never have been made. Certainly, I would never have laid claim to any of it had my own union not so exuberantly cheated me. In any case, I was now free of my M-G-M contract. I had also, inadvertently, been reinfected with Roman fever—love of the old city, which only time can cure.

I left Rome in May for the Hudson. ◆

PORTFOLIO
BY CLAES OLDENBURG

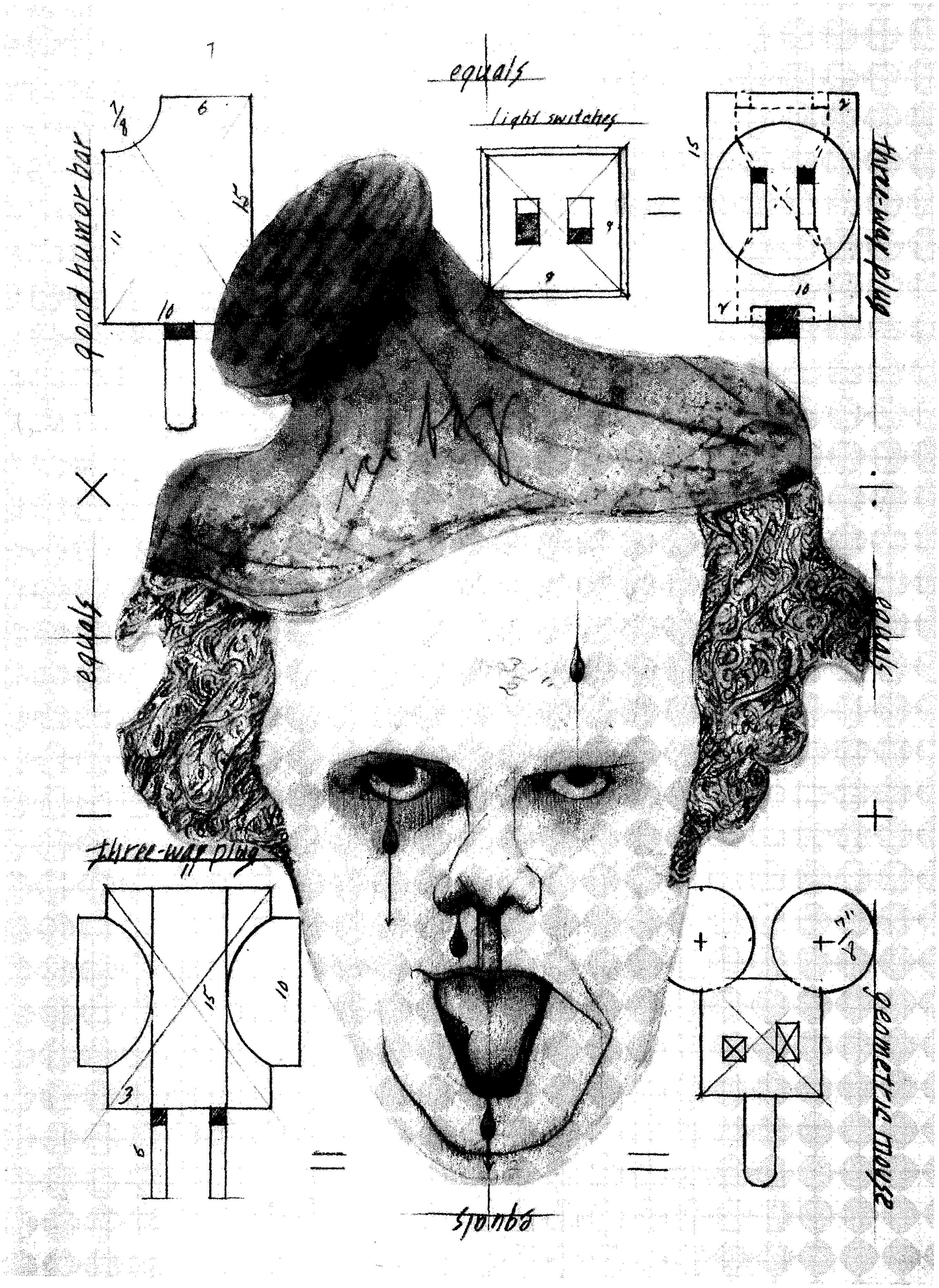
STANDUP ARTIST

PART magician and part clown, Claes Oldenburg slips through the nets of contemporary art criticism. The consensus that has built up around Lichtenstein, Warhol, Rosenquist, and the other American Pop artists has somehow failed to settle the question of Oldenburg's relative standing. His current travelling retrospective, which opens at the Guggenheim on October 6th, may throw some new light on that, but then again it may not. No artist is harder to pin down than Oldenburg, who since the late nineteen-seventies has operated mostly outside the New York gallery orbit.

With his wife and collaborator, Coosje van Bruggen, Oldenburg moves around the world these days, building and installing large-scale environmental sculptures of common objects in public place: giant shuttlecocks in Kansas City, a thirty-six-foot pickaxe in Kassel (Germany), a colossal Swiss Army knife-boat in Venice—objects that appear to have a widespread appeal even to the sort of people who might be expected to hate them. He has become a popular artist, without compromising his own anti-establishment, anti-heroic vision, and that, of course, gives art critics the willies. "I am for an art," as he said back in 1961, "that does something other than sit on its ass in a museum."

Everything Oldenburg does starts with drawing. He draws constantly, spontaneously, exuberantly, brilliantly. An Oldenburg drawing catches an Oldenburg thought on the wing, usually in the act of changing into something else. In his 1969 "Self-Portrait," he presents himself as a divided psyche, wearing an ice bag instead of an artist's beret, while various Pop object-sculptures chase and merge into each other around his aching head. "Colossal Fagend in Park Setting" (1967) is a drawing for a proposed public sculpture in Hyde Park, London; it never got built, for obvious reasons. Asked to do a poster for a St. Louis music festival, Oldenburg came up with a stentorian "Tongue Cloud." It was rejected, too, but that was in 1975—today, who could resist it?

—CALVIN TOMKINS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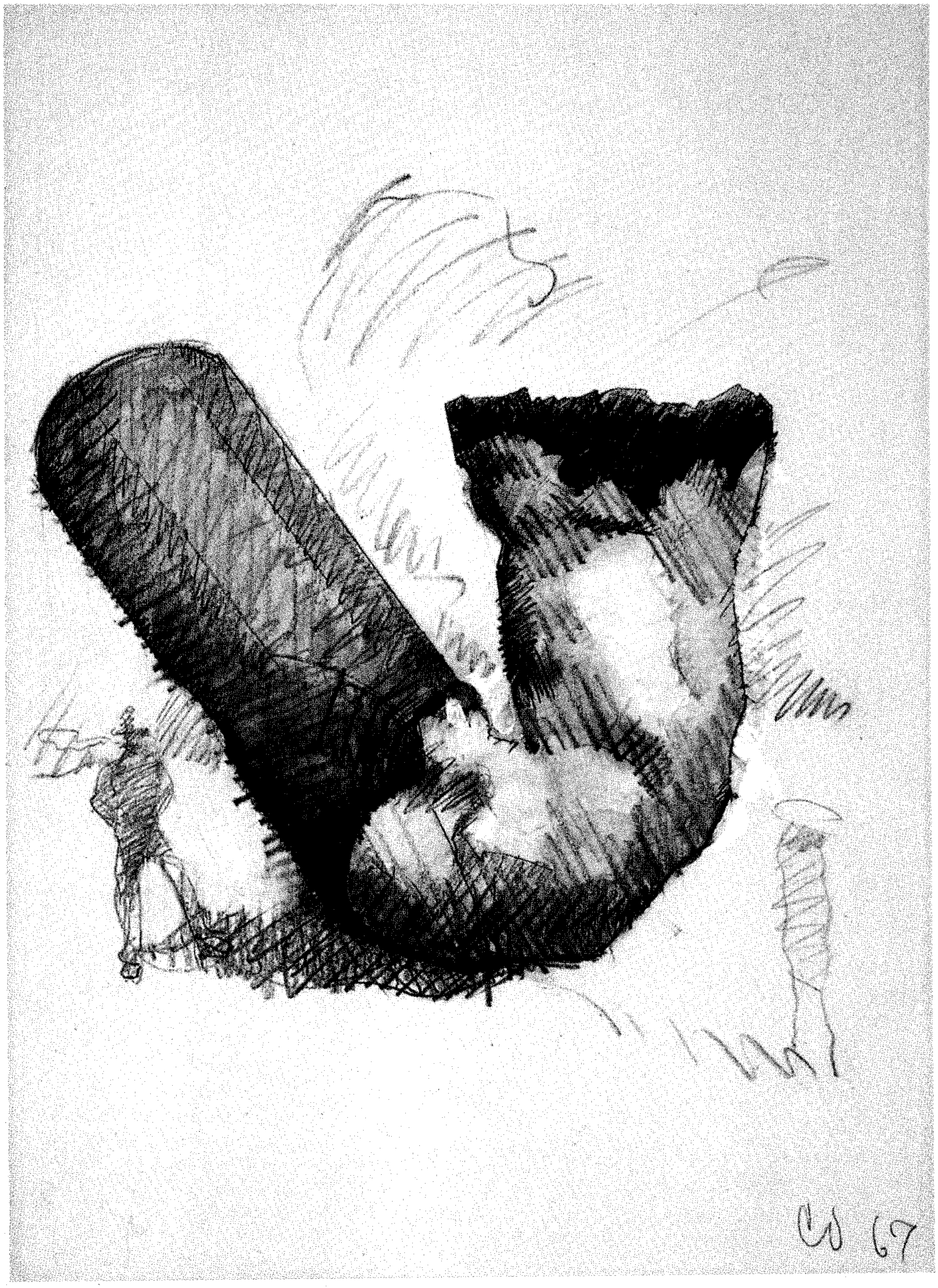
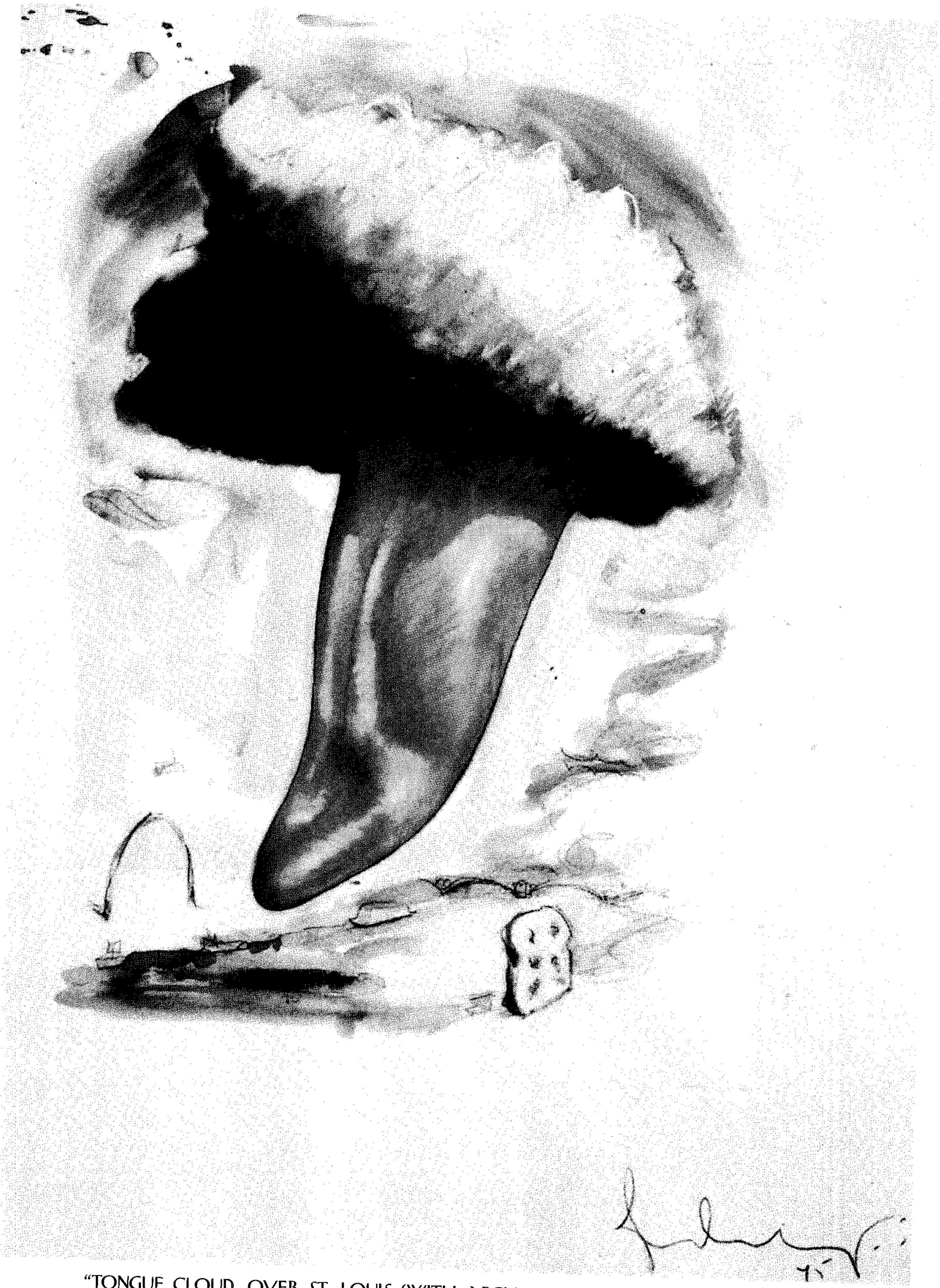
"SYMBOLIC SELF-PORTRAIT WITH EQUALS"

MODERNA MUSEET, STOCKHOLM.



"COLOSSAL FAGEND IN PARK SETTING"

COLLECTION OF ROBERT AND JANE MEYERHOFF, PHOENIX, MARYLAND.



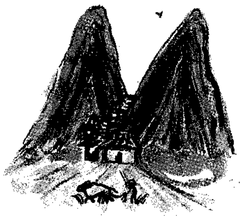
THE HELMAN COLLECTION.

"TONGUE CLOUD, OVER ST. LOUIS (WITH ARCH AND COLOSSAL RAISIN BREAD)"

FICTION

YOUNG GIRL'S WISH

BY AMY TAN



MY first morning in China, I awake in a dark hotel room in Guilin and see a figure leaning over my bed, staring at me with the concentrated look of a killer. I'm about to scream, when I hear my sister Kwan saying, in Chinese, "Sleeping on your side—so *this* is the reason your posture is so bad. From now on, you must sleep on your back. Also, do exercises."

She snaps on the light and proceeds to demonstrate, hands on hips, twisting at the waist like a sixties P.E. teacher. I wonder how long she's been standing by my bed, waiting for me to waken so she can present her latest bit of unsolicited advice. Her bed is already made.

I look at my watch and say, in a grumpy voice, "Kwan, it's only five in the morning."

"This is China. Everyone else is up. Only you're asleep."

"Not anymore."

We've been in China less than eight hours, and already she's taking control of my life. We're on her terrain; we have to go by her rules, speak her language. She's in Chinese heaven.

Snatching my blankets, she laughs. "Libby-ah, hurry and get up." Kwan has never been able to correctly pronounce my name, Olivia. "I want to go see my village and surprise everyone. I want to watch Big Ma's mouth fall open and hear her words of surprise: 'Hey, I thought I chased you away. Why are you back?' "

Kwan pushes open the window. We're staying at the Sheraton Guilin, which faces the Li River. Outside it's still dark. I can hear the *trnnng! trnnng!* of what sounds like a noisy pachinko parlor. I go to the window and look down. Peddlers on tricycle carts are ringing their bells, greeting one another as they haul their baskets of grain, melons, and turnips to market. The boulevard is bristling with the shadows of bicycles and cars, workers and schoolchildren—the whole world chirping and honking, shouting and laughing, as though it were the middle of the day. On the handlebar of a bicycle dangle the gigantic heads of four pigs, roped through the nostrils, their white snouts curled in death grins.

"Look." Kwan points down the street to a set of stalls lit by low-watt bulbs. "We can buy breakfast there, cheap and good. Better than paying nine dollars each for hotel food—and for what? Doughnut, orange juice, bacon, who wants it?"

I recall the admonition in our guidebooks to steer clear of food sold by street venders. "Nine dollars, that's not much," I reason.

"Wah! You can't think this way anymore. Now you're in China. Nine dollars is lots of money here, one week's salary."

"Yeah, but cheap food might come with food poisoning."

Kwan gestures to the street. "You look. All those people there, do they have food poisoning?"

Kwan is right. Who am I to begrudge carrying home a few parasites? I slip some warm clothes on and go into the hallway to knock on my husband's door. Simon answers immediately, fully dressed. "I couldn't sleep," he admits.

In five minutes, the three of us are on the sidewalk. We pass dozens of food stalls, some with portable propane burners, others with makeshift grills. In front of the stalls, customers squat in semicircles, eating noodles and dumplings. Kwan chooses a vender who is slapping what look like floury pancakes onto the sides of a blazing-hot oil drum. "Give me three," she says, in Chinese. The vender pries the pancakes off with his blackened fingers, and Simon and I yelp as we toss the hot pancakes up and down like circus jugglers.

"How much?" Kwan opens her change purse.

"Six yuan," the pancake vender tells her.

I calculate the cost is a little more than a dollar, dirt cheap. By Kwan's estimation, this is tantamount to extortion. "Wah!" She points to another customer. "You charged him only fifty fen a pancake."

"Of course! He's a local worker. You three are tourists."

"What are you saying! I'm also local."

"You?" The vender snorts and gives her a cynical once-over. "From where, then?"

"Changmian."

His eyebrows rise in suspicion. "Really, now! Who do you know in Changmian?"

Kwan rattles off some names.

The vender slaps his thigh. "Wu Ze-min? You know Wu Ze-min?"

"Of course. As children, we lived across the lane from each other. I haven't seen him in over thirty years."

"His daughter married my son."

"Nonsense!"

The man laughs. "It's true. Two years ago. My wife and my mother opposed the match—just because the girl was from Changmian. But they have old countryside ideas, they still believe Changmian is cursed. Not me, I'm not superstitious, not anymore. And now a baby's been born, last spring, a girl, but I don't mind."

"Hard to believe Wu Ze-min's a grandfather. How is he?"

"Lost his wife twenty years ago, when they were sent to the cowsheds for counter-revolutionary thinking. They smashed his hands, but not his mind. Later he married another woman, Yang Ling-fang."

"That's not possible! She was the little sister of an old schoolmate of mine. I still see her as a tender young girl."

"Not so tender anymore. She's got *jiaoban* skin, tough as leather, been through plenty of hardships, let me tell you."

Kwan and the vender continue to gossip while Simon and I eat our pancakes. They taste like a cross between focaccia and a green-onion omelette. By now Kwan and the vender act like old friends, and he advises her how to get a good price on a driver to take us to Changmian.

"All right, older brother," Kwan says, "how much do I owe you?"

FILIP PAGOWSKI

"Six yuan."

"Wah! Still six yuan? Too much, too much. I'll give you two, no more than that."

"Make it three, then."

Kwan grunts, settles up, and we leave. When we're half a block away, I whisper to Simon, "That man said Changmian is cursed."

Kwan overhears me. "*Tsk!* That's just a story, a thousand years old. Only stupid people still think Changmian is a bad-luck place to live."

I translate for Simon, then ask, "What kind of bad luck?"

"You don't want to know."

I am about to insist she tell me, when Simon points to an open-air market overflowing with wicker baskets of thick-skinned pomelos, dried beans, cassia tea, chilies.

I inhale deeply and imagine that I'm filling my lungs with the very air that inspired my ancestors, whoever they might have been. Because we arrived late the night before, we haven't yet seen the Guilin landscape, its fabled karst peaks, its magical limestone caves, and all the other sites listed in our guidebook as the reasons this is known in China as "the most beautiful place on earth."

Looking up toward cloud level, we see the amazing peaks, which resemble prehistoric shark's teeth, the clichéd subject of every Chinese calendar and scroll painting. But tucked in the gums of these ancient stone formations is the blight of high-rises, their stucco exteriors grimy with industrial pollution, their signboards splashed with garish red and gilt characters. Between these are lower buildings from an earlier era, all of them painted a proletarian toothpaste-green. And here and there is the rubble of prewar houses and impromptu garbage dumps. The whole scene gives Guilin the look and stench of a pretty face marred by tawdry lipstick, gapped teeth, and an advanced case of periodontal disease.

"Boy, oh boy," whispers Simon. "If Guilin is China's most beautiful city, I can't wait to see what the cursed village of Changmian looks like."

We catch up with Kwan. "Everything is entirely different, no longer the same." Kwan must be sad to see how horribly Guilin has changed over the past thirty years. But then she says, in a proud and marvelling voice, "So much progress, everything is so much better."

A couple of blocks farther on, we come upon a bird market. Hanging from tree limbs are hundreds of decorative cages containing singing finches, and exotic birds with gorgeous plumage, punk crests, and fanlike tails. On the ground are cages of huge birds, perhaps eagles or hawks, magnificent, with menacing talons and beaks. There are also the ordinary fowl—chickens and ducks, destined for the stewpot.

I see a man hissing at me. "*Ssssss!*" He sternly motions me to come over. What is he, the secret police?

The man solemnly reaches underneath a table and brings out a cage. "You like," he says, in English. Facing me is a snowy-white owl with milk-chocolate highlights. It looks like a fat Siamese cat with wings. The owl blinks its golden eyes and I fall in love.

"Hey, Simon, Kwan, come here. Look at this."

"One hundred dollar, U.S.," the man says. "Very cheap."

Simon shakes his head and says in a weird combination of pantomime and broken English: "Take bird on plane, not possible, customs official will say stop, not allowed, must pay big fine—"

"How much?" the man asks brusquely. "You say. I give you morning price, best price."

"There's no use bargaining," Kwan tells the man in Chinese. "We're tourists. We can't bring birds back to the United States, no matter how cheap."

"Aaah, who's talking about bringing it back?" the man replies in rapid Chinese. "Buy it today, then take it to that restaurant, over there. For a small price, they can cook it tonight for your dinner."

"Oh, my God!" I turn to Simon. "He's selling this owl as food!"

"That's disgusting. Tell him he's a fucking goon."

"You tell him!"

"I can't speak Chinese."

The man must think I am urging my husband to buy me an owl for dinner. "You're very lucky I even have *one*. The cat-eagle is rare, very rare," he brags. "Took me three weeks to catch it."

"I don't believe this," I tell Simon. "I'm going to be sick."

Then I hear Kwan saying, "A cat-eagle is not that rare, just hard to catch. Besides, I hear the flavor is ordinary."

"To be honest," says the man, "it's not as pungent as, say, a pangolin. But you eat a cat-eagle to give you strength and ambition, not to be fussy over taste. Also, it's good for improving your eyesight. One of my customers was nearly blind. After he ate a cat-eagle, he could see his wife for the first time in twenty years. The customer came back and cursed me: 'Shit! She's ugly enough to scare a monkey. Fuck your mother for letting me eat that cat-eagle!' "

Kwan laughs heartily. "Yes, yes, I've heard this about cat-eagles. It's a good story." She pulls out her change purse and holds up a hundred-yuan note.

"Kwan, what are you doing?" I cry. "We are *not* going to eat this owl!"

The man waves away the hundred yuan. "Only American money," he says firmly. "One hundred *American* dollars."

Kwan pulls out an American ten-dollar bill.

"Kwan!" I shout.

The man shakes his head, refusing the ten. Kwan shrugs, then starts to walk away. The man shouts to her to give him fifty, then. She comes back and holds out a ten and a five, and says, "That's my last offer."

"This is insane!" Simon mutters.

The man sighs, then relinquishes the cage, complaining, "What a shame, so little money for so much work. Look at my hands, three weeks of climbing and cutting down bushes to catch this bird."

As we walk away, I grab Kwan's free arm: "There's no way I'm going to let you eat this owl. I don't care if we are in China."

"Shh! Shh! You'll scare him!" Kwan pulls the cage out of my reach. She gives me a maddening smile, then walks over to a concrete wall overlooking the river and sets the cage on top. She meows to the owl. "Oh, little friend, you want to go to Changmian? You want to climb with me to the top of the mountain, let my little sister watch you fly away?" The owl twists his head and blinks.

I almost cry with joy and guilt. Why do I think such bad things about Kwan?

"See that?" I hear Kwan say. "Over there." She's pointing to a cone-shaped peak off in the distance. "Just outside my village stands a sharp-headed mountain, taller than that one, even. We call it Young Girl's Wish, after a slave girl who ran away to the top of it, then flew off with a phoenix who was her

THE BRANCH

The artist in my father transformed the diagonal
Crack across the mirror on our bathroom cabinet
Into a branch: that was his way of mending things,
A streak of brown paint, dabs of green, an accident
That sprouted leaves,
                                        awakening the child in me
To the funny faces he pulls when he is shaving.
He wears a vest, white buttons at his collarbone.
The two halves of my father's face are joining up.
His soapy nostrils disappear among the leaves.

—MICHAEL LONGLEY

lover." Kwan looks at me. "It's a story, just superstition."

I'm amused that she thinks she has to explain.

Kwan continues, "Yet all the girls in our village believed in that tale, not because they were stupid but because they wanted to hope for a better life. We thought that if we climbed to the top and made a wish, it might come true. So we raised little hatchlings, and when the birds were ready to fly we climbed to the top of Young Girl's Wish and let them go. The birds would then fly to where the phoenixes lived and tell them our wishes." Kwan sniffs. "Big Ma told me the peak was named Young Girl's Wish because a crazy girl climbed to the top. But when she tried to fly, she fell all the way down and lodged herself so firmly into the earth she became a boulder. Big Ma said that's why you can see so many boulders at the bottom of that peak—they're all the stupid girls who followed her kind of crazy thinking, wishing for hopeless things."

I laugh. Kwan stares at me fiercely, as if I were Big Ma, the aunt who raised her. "You can't stop young girls from wishing. No! Everyone must dream. To stop dreaming—well, that's like saying you can never change your fate. Isn't that true?"

"I suppose."

"So now you guess what I wished for."

"I don't know. What?"

"Come on, you guess."

"A handsome husband."

"No."

"A car."

Kwan laughs and slaps my arm. "You guessed wrong! O.K., I'll tell you." She looks toward the mountain peaks. "Before I left for America, I raised three birds, not just one, so I could make three wishes at the top of the peak. I told myself, If these three wishes come true, my life is complete, I can die happy. My first wish: to have a sister I could love with all my heart, only that, and I would ask for nothing more from her. My second wish: to return to China with my sister. My third wish"—Kwan's voice now quavers—"for Big Ma to see this and say she was sorry she sent me away."

This is the first time Kwan's ever shown me how deeply she can resent someone who's treated her wrong. "I opened the cage," she continues, "and let my three birds go free." She flings out her hand in demonstration. "But one of them beat its wings uselessly, drifting in half-circles, before it fell like a stone all the way to the bottom. Now you see, two of my wishes have already happened: I have you, and together we are in China. Last night, I realized my third wish would never come true. Big Ma will never tell me she is sorry."

She holds up the cage with the owl. "But now I have a beautiful cat-eagle that can carry with him my new wish. When he flies away, all my old sadnesses will go with him. Then both of us will be free."

ACTUALLY, Kwan is my half sister, but I never mention that publicly. That would be an insult, as if she deserved only fifty per cent of my love. She was born in China. I was born in San Francisco, after our father immigrated there and married my mother.

Mom calls herself "American mixed grill, a bit of everything white, fatty, and fried." She was born in Moscow, Idaho, where she was a champion baton twirler and once won a county-fair prize for growing a deformed potato that had the profile of Jimmy Durante. She told me she dreamed she'd one day grow up to be different—thin, exotic, and noble, like Luise Rainer, who won an Oscar playing O-lan in "The Good Earth." When Mom moved to San Francisco and became a Kelly girl instead, she did the next-best thing. She married our father. Mom thinks that her marrying out of the Anglo race makes her a liberal. "When Jack and I met," she still tells people, "there were laws against mixed marriages. We broke the law for love." She neglects to mention that those laws didn't apply in California.

None of us, including my mom, even knew that Kwan *existed* until shortly before my father died, of renal failure. I was not quite four when he passed away. But I still remember the last day I saw him in the hospital.

I was sitting on a sticky vinyl chair, eating a bowl of strawberry Jell-O cubes that my father had given me from his lunch tray. He was propped up in bed, breathing hard. Mom would cry one minute, then act cheerful. The next thing I remember, my father was whispering and Mom leaned in close to listen. Her mouth opened wider and wider. Then her head turned sharply toward me, all twisted with horror.

"Your daughter?" I heard my mom say. "Bring her back?"

What I remember after that is a jumble: the bowl of Jell-O crashing to the floor, Mom staring at a photo, then me seeing the black-and-white snapshot of a skinny baby with patchy hair.

It turned out that my father had been a university student in Guilin. He used to buy live frogs for his supper at the outdoor market from a young woman named Li Chen. He later married her, and in 1944 she gave birth to a daughter. In 1948, my father's first wife died, of a lung disease, perhaps t.b. He went to Hong Kong to search for work and left Kwan in the care of his wife's younger sister, Li Bin-bin, who lived in a small mountain village called Changmian. He sent money for their support—but in 1949, after the Communists took over, it was impossible for my father to return. What else could he do? With a heavy heart, he left for America to start a new life and forget about the sadness he left behind.

Eleven years later, while he was dying in the hospital, the ghost of his first wife appeared at the foot of his bed. "Claim back your daughter," she warned, "or suffer the consequences after death!"

Looking back, I can imagine how my mom must have felt when she first heard this. Another wife? A daughter in China? We were a modern American family. We spoke English. Sure, we ate Chinese food, but take-out, like everyone else. And we lived in a ranch-style house in Daly City. My father worked for the Government Accounting Office. My mother went to P.T.A. meetings. She had never heard my father talk about Chinese superstitions before; they attended church and bought life insurance instead.

After my father died, my mother kept telling everyone how he had treated her "just like a Chinese empress." She made all sorts of grief-stricken promises to God and my father's grave. My mother vowed never to remarry. She vowed to teach us children to do honor to the family name. She vowed to find my father's firstborn child, Kwan, and bring her to the United States. The last promise was the only one she kept.

I was nearly six when Kwan arrived.

WE head to the hotel, in search of a car that will take one local, two tourists, and a cat-eagle to Changmian village. By nine, we've procured the services of a driver, an amiable young man who knows how to do the capitalist hustle. "Clean, cheap, fast," he declares, in Chinese. And then he makes an aside for Simon's benefit.

"What'd he say?" Simon asks.

"He's letting you know he speaks English."

Our driver reminds me of the slick Hong Kong youths who hang out in the trendy pool halls of San Francisco, the same pomaded hair, his inch-long pinkie nail, perfectly manicured, symbolizing that his lucky life is one without backbreaking work. He flashes us a smile, revealing a set of nicotine-stained teeth. "You call me Rocky," he says, in heavily accented English. "Like famous movie star." He opens the door with a flourish, and we climb into a black Nissan, a late-model sedan that, curiously, lacks seat belts and safety headrests. Do the Japanese think Chinese lives aren't worth saving? "China has either better drivers or no liability lawyers," Simon concludes.

Rocky happily assumes we like loud music and slips in a Eurythmics tape, a gift from one of his other "excellent American customers." And so, with Kwan in the front seat and Simon, the owl, and me in back, we start our journey to Changmian, blasted by the beat of "Sisters Are Doing It for Themselves."

Rocky's excellent American customers have also taught him select phrases, which he recites to us: "Where you go? I know it. Jump in, let's go." "Go faster? Too fast? No way, José." "How far? Not far. Too far." "Park car? Wait a sec. Back in flash." "Not lost. No problem. Chill out."

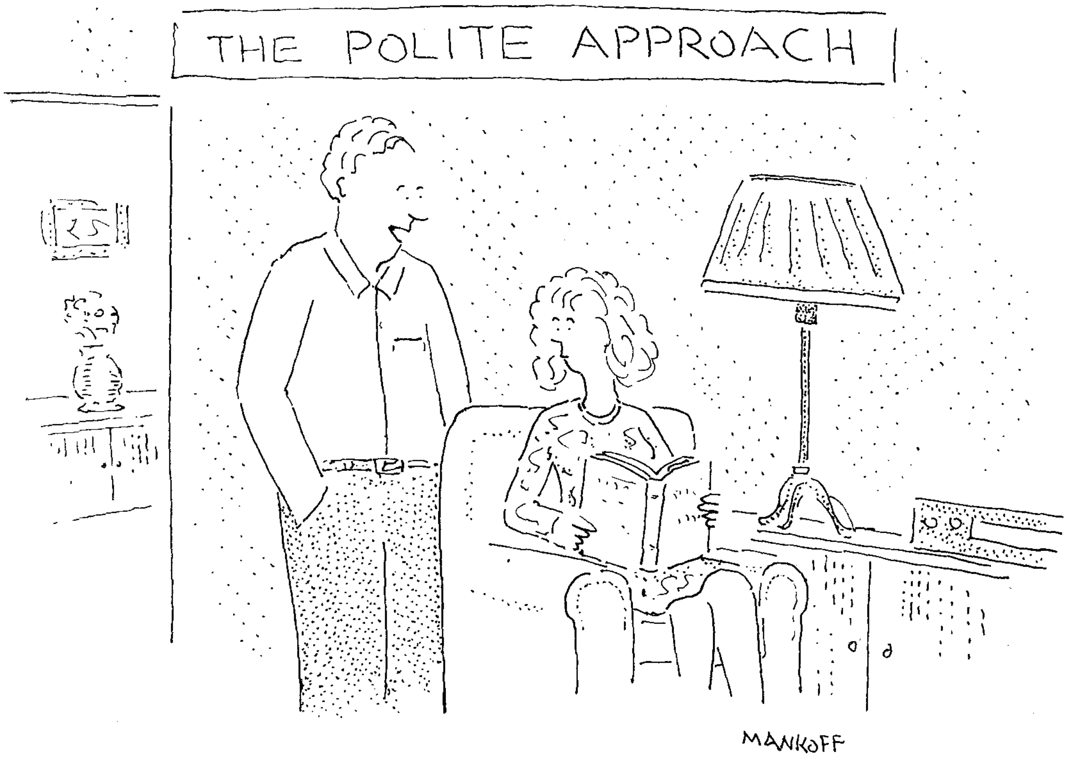
Rocky explains that he is teaching himself English so he can one day go to America.

"My idea," he says, in Chinese, "is to become a famous movie actor, specializing in martial arts. Of course, I don't expect a big success from the start. Maybe I'll have to take a job as a taxi-driver. But I'm hardworking. In America, people don't know how to be as hardworking as we Chinese. We also know how to suffer. What's unbearable to Americans would be ordinary for me. Don't you think that's true, older sister?"

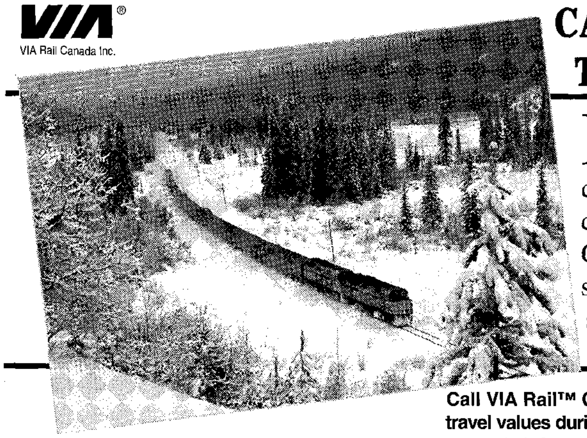
Kwan gives an ambiguous "Hmm." I wonder whether she is thinking of her brother-in-law, a former chemist, who immigrated to the States and now works as a dishwasher because he's too scared to speak English, lest people think he is stupid. Just then Simon's eyes grow round, and I shout, "Holy shit!" as the car nearly sideswipes two schoolgirls holding hands. Rocky blithely goes on about his dream.

"When I live in America, I'll save most of my money, spend only a little on food, cigarettes, maybe the movies every now and then, and, of course, a car for my taxi business. My needs are simple. Even if I don't become a movie star, I can still come back to China and live like a rich man."

He looks at us through the rearview mirror and gives us a thumbs-up. A second later, Simon grips the front seat, and I shout, "Holy Jesus shit!" We are about to hit a young woman on a bicycle with



"Can I trouble you for a sexual favor?"



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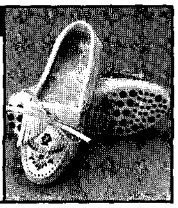

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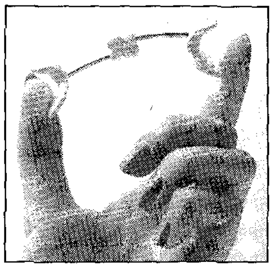

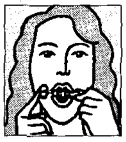

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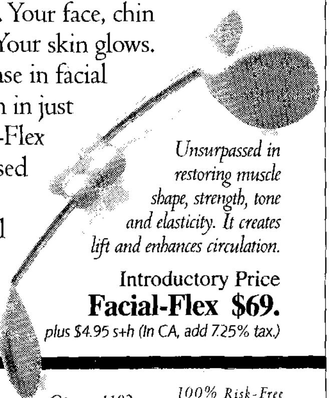

her baby perched on the handlebar. At the last possible moment, the cyclist wobbles to the right and out of our way.

Rocky laughs. "Chill out," he says. And then he explains, in Chinese, why we shouldn't worry. Kwan turns around and translates for Simon: "He said in China if driver run over somebody, driver always at fault, no matter how careless other person."

Simon looks at me. "This is supposed to reassure us? Did something get lost in the translation?"

"It doesn't make any sense," I tell Kwan, as Rocky veers in and out of traffic. "A dead pedestrian is a dead pedestrian, no matter whose fault it is."

"*Tst!* This American thinking," Kwan replies. The owl swings his head and stares at me, as if to say, Wise up, gringa, this is China, your American ideas don't work here. "In China," Kwan goes on, "you always responsible for someone else, no matter what. You get run over, this my fault, you my little sister. Now you understand?"

We drive by a strip of shops selling rattan furniture and straw hats. And then we're in the outskirts of town, both sides of the road lined with mile after mile of identical one-room restaurants. Some are in the stages of being built, their walls layers of brick, mud plaster, and whitewash. They advertise the same specialties: orange soda pop and steamy-hot noodle soup. Idle waitresses squat outside, watching our car whizz by.

A few miles farther on, the restaurants give way to simple wooden stalls with thatched roofs, and, even farther, peddlers, without any shelter, stand by the road, yelling at the top of their lungs, waving their string bags of pomelos, their bottles of homemade hot sauce.

As the stretches between villages grow longer, Kwan falls asleep, her head bobbing lower and lower. She half awakens with a snort every time we hit a pothole. After a while, she emits long, rhythmical snores, blissfully unaware that Rocky is driving faster and faster down the two-lane road. Each time he accelerates, the owl opens his wings slightly, then settles down again in the cramped cage. I'm gripping my knees, then sucking air between clenched teeth whenever Rocky swings into the left lane.

We are now tailgating a truck filled

with soldiers in green uniforms. They wave to us. Rocky honks his horn, then swerves sharply to pass. As we go by the truck, I can see an oncoming bus bearing down on us, the urgent blare of its horn growing louder and louder. "Oh, my God, oh, my God," I whimper. I close my eyes, and Simon grabs my hand. The car jerks back into the right lane. I hear a *whoosh*, then the blare of the bus horn receding.

"That's it," I say in a tense whisper. "I'm going to tell him to slow down."

"I don't know, Olivia. He might be offended."

I glare at Simon. "What? You'd rather die than be rude?"

He affects an attitude of nonchalance. "They all drive like that."

"So mass suicide makes it O.K.?"

"Well, we haven't seen any accidents."

Simon stares at me. At that moment, Rocky brakes abruptly. Kwan and the owl awake with a flutter of arms and wings. Rocky rolls down the window and sticks out his head. He curses under his breath, then starts punching the car horn with the heel of his hand.

After a few minutes, we see the source of our delay: an accident, a bad one, to judge from the spray of glass, metal, and personal belongings that litters the road. The smells of spilled gasoline and scorched rubber hang in the air. Just as I am about to say to Simon, "See?" our car inches past a black minivan, belly up, its doors splayed like the broken wings of a squashed insect. A tire lies in a nearby vegetable field. Seconds later, we go by the other half of the impact: a red-and-white bus. The large front window is smashed, the hound-nosed hood twisted and smeared with a hideous swath of blood. About fifty gawkers, farm tools still in hand, mill around, staring and pointing at various parts of the crumpled bus as if it were a science exhibit. And then I see a dozen or so injured people, some clutching themselves and bellowing in pain, others lying quietly in shock. Or perhaps they are already dead.

"Shit, I can't believe this," says Simon. "There's no ambulance, no doctors."

"Stop the car," I order Rocky, in Chinese. "We should help them." Why did I say that? What can I possibly do? I can barely look at the victims, let alone touch them.

"*Ai-ya.*" Kwan stares at the field. "So many yin people." Yin people? Kwan believes she can see ghosts, those who have died and now dwell in the World of Yin. Is she now saying there are dead people out there? The owl coos mournfully, and my hands turn slippery-cold.

Rocky keeps his eyes on the road ahead, driving forward, leaving the tragedy behind us. "We'd be of no use," he says, in Chinese. "We have no medicine, no bandages. Besides, it's not good to interfere, especially since you're foreigners. Don't worry, the police will be along soon."

I'm secretly relieved he isn't heeding my instructions.

"You're Americans," he continues, his voice deep with Chinese authority. "You're not used to seeing tragedies. You pity us, yes, because you can later go home to a comfortable life and forget what you've seen. For us, this type of disaster is commonplace. We have so many people, no room left for pity."

"Would someone please tell me what's going on!" Simon exclaims. "Why aren't we stopping?"

"Don't ask questions," I snap. "Remember?"

When we get back on the open road, Kwan gives Rocky some advice. He solemnly nods, then slows down.

"What'd she say?" Simon asks.

"Chinese logic. If we're killed, no payment. And in the next life, he'll owe us big time."

ANOTHER three hours pass. I know we have to be getting close to Changmian. Kwan is pointing out landmarks. "There! There!" she cries huskily, bouncing up and down like a little child. "Those two peaks. The village they surround is called Wife Waiting for Husband's Return. But where is the tree? What happened to the tree? Next to that house, there was a very big tree, maybe a thousand years old."

She scans ahead. "That place there! We used to hold a big market. But now look, it's just an empty field. And there—that mountain up ahead! That's the one we called Young Girl's Wish."

Kwan laughs, but the next second she seems puzzled. "Funny, now that mountain looks so small. Why is that? Did it shrink, washed down by the rain? Or maybe the peak was worn down by too many girls running up there to make a wish. Or maybe it's because I've become too American and now I see things

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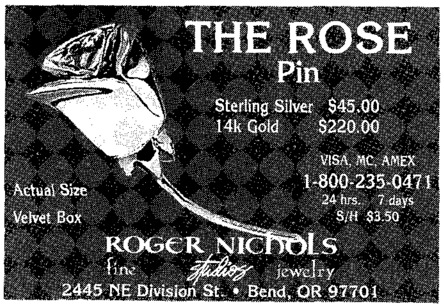

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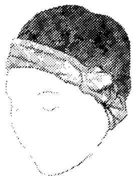

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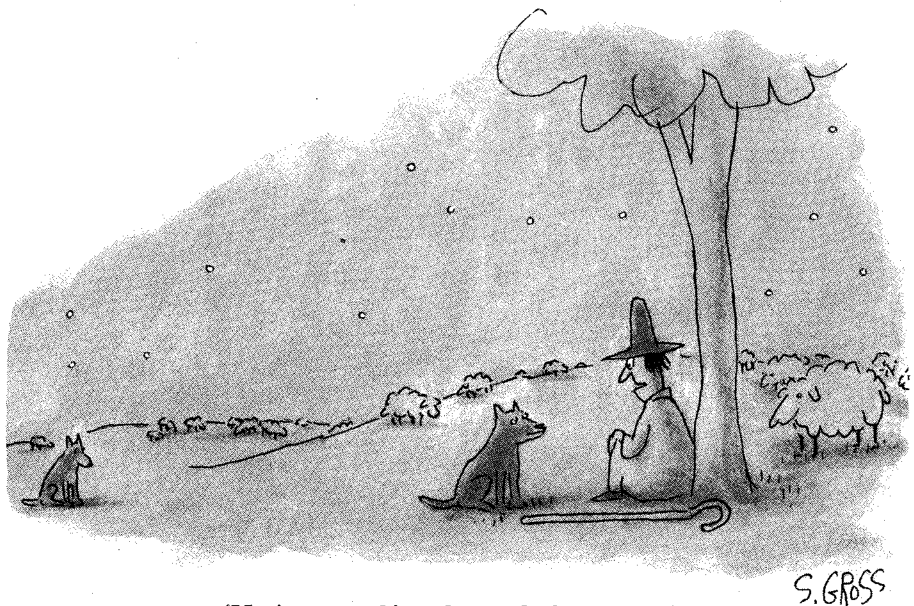

"You're a working dog, so be back early."

• •

with different eyes, everything looking smaller, poorer, not as good."

All at once, Kwan shouts to Rocky to turn down a small dirt road we have just passed. He makes an abrupt U-turn, knocking Simon and me into each other, and causing the owl to shriek. We are rumbling along a rutted lane, past fields with pillows of moist red dirt. "Turn left, turn left!" Kwan orders. She has her hands clasped in her lap. "Too many years, too many years," she says, as if chanting.

We approach a stand of trees, and then, as soon as Kwan announces, "Changmian," I see it: a village nestled between two jagged peaks, their hillsides a velvety moss-green with folds deepening into emerald. More comes into view: crooked rows of buildings whitewashed with lime, their pitched tile roofs laid in the traditional pattern of dragon coils. Surrounding the village are well-tended fields and mirrorlike ponds neatly divided by stone walls and irrigation trenches. We jump out of the car. Miraculously, Changmian has avoided the detritus of modernization. I see no tin roofs or electrical power lines. In contrast to other villages we've passed, the outlying lands here haven't become dumping grounds for garbage, the alleys aren't lined with crumpled cigarette packs or pink plastic bags. Clean stone pathways crisscross the village, then thread up a cleft between the two peaks and disappear through a stone archway. In the distance is another pair of tall peaks, dark jade in color, and beyond those the purple shadows of two more. Simon and I stare at each other, wide-eyed.

I feel as though we've stumbled on a fabled misty land, half memory, half illusion. Are we in Chinese Nirvana? Changmian looks like the carefully cropped photos found in travel brochures advertising "a charmed world of the distant past, where visitors can step back in time." There must be something wrong, I keep warning myself. Around the corner we'll stumble on reality: the fast-food market, the tire junkyard, the signs indicating this village is really a Chinese fantasyland for tourists.

"I feel like I've seen this place before," I whisper to Simon.

"Me, too. Maybe it was in a documentary." He laughs. "Or a car commercial."

I gaze at the mountains and realize why Changmian seems so familiar. It's the setting for Kwan's stories, the ones that filter into my dreams. There they are: the archways, the cassia trees, the hills leading to Thistle Mountain. And being here, I feel as if the membrane separating the two halves of my life has finally been shed.

From out of nowhere we hear squeals and cheers. Fifty tiny schoolchildren race toward the perimeter of a fenced-in yard. As we draw closer, the children shriek, turn on their heels, and run back to the school building, laughing. After a few seconds, they come screaming toward us like a flock of birds, followed by their smiling teacher. They stand at attention, and then shout all together, in English, “A-B-C! One-two-three! How are you! Hello goodbye!”

We continue along the path. Two young men on bicycles slow down and stop to stare at us. We keep walking and round a corner. Kwan gasps. Farther up the path, in front of an arched gateway, stand a dozen smiling people. Kwan puts her hand to her mouth, then runs toward them. When she reaches the group, she grabs each person's hand between her two palms, then hails a stout woman and slaps her on the back.

“Fat!” Kwan says. “You've grown unbelievably fat!”

“Hey, look at you—what happened to your hair? Did you ruin it on purpose?”

“This is the style! What, have you been in the countryside so long you don't recognize good style?”

“Oh, listen to her, she's still bossy, I can tell.”

“You were always the bossy one, not—”

Kwan stops in midsentence, transfixed by a stone wall. You would think it's the most fascinating sight she's ever seen.

“Big Ma,” she murmurs. “What's happened? How can this be?”

A man in the crowd guffaws. “Ha! She was so anxious to see you she got up early this morning, then jumped on a bus to meet you in Guilin. And now look—you're here, she's there. Won't she be mad!”

Everyone laughs, except Kwan. She walks closer to the wall, calling hoarsely, “Big Ma, Big Ma.” Several people whisper, and everyone draws back, frightened.

“Uh-oh,” I say.

“Why is Kwan crying?” Simon whispers.

“Big Ma, oh, Big Ma.” Tears are streaming down Kwan's cheeks. “You must believe me, this is not what I wished. How unlucky that you died on the day that I've come home.” A few women gasp and cover their mouths.

I walk over to Kwan. “What are you saying? Why do you think she's dead?

“Why is everyone so freaked?” Simon glances about.

I hold up my hand. “I'm not sure.” I turn back to her. “Kwan?” I say gently. “Kwan?” But she does not seem to hear me. She is looking tenderly at the wall, laughing and crying.

“Yes, I knew this,” she is saying. “Of

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course, I knew. In my heart, I knew all the time."

IN the afternoon, the villagers hold an uneasy homecoming party for Kwan in the community hall. The news has spread through Changmian that Kwan has seen Big Ma's ghost. Yet she has not announced this to the village, and since there is no proof that Big Ma has died, there is no reason to call off a food-laden celebration that evidently took her friends days to prepare. During the festivities, Kwan does not brag about her car, her sofa, her English. She listens quietly as her former childhood playmates recount major events of their lives: the birth of twin sons, a railway trip to a big city, and the time a group of student intellectuals was sent to Changmian for reëducation during the Cultural Revolution.

"They thought they were smarter than us," recounts one woman, whose hands are gnarled by arthritis. "They wanted us to raise a fast-growing rice, three crops a year instead of two. They gave us special seeds. They brought us insect poison. Then the little frogs that swam in the rice fields and ate the insects, they all died. And the ducks that ate the frogs, they all died, too. Then the rice died."

A man with bushy hair shouts, "So we said, 'What good is it to plant three crops of rice that fail rather than two that are successful?' "

The woman with arthritic hands continues: "These same intellectuals tried to breed our mules! Ha! Can you believe it? For two years, every week, one of us would ask them, 'Any luck?' And they'd say, 'Not yet, not yet.' And we'd try to keep our faces serious but encouraging. 'Try harder, comrade,' we'd say. 'Don't give up.' "

We are still laughing when a young boy runs into the hall, shouting that an official from Guilin has arrived in a fancy black car. Silence. The official comes into the hall, and everyone stands. He solemnly holds up the identity card of Li Bin-bin and asks if she belonged to the village. Several people glance nervously at Kwan. She walks slowly toward the official, looks at the identity card, and nods. The official makes an announcement, and a ripple of moans and then wails fills the room.

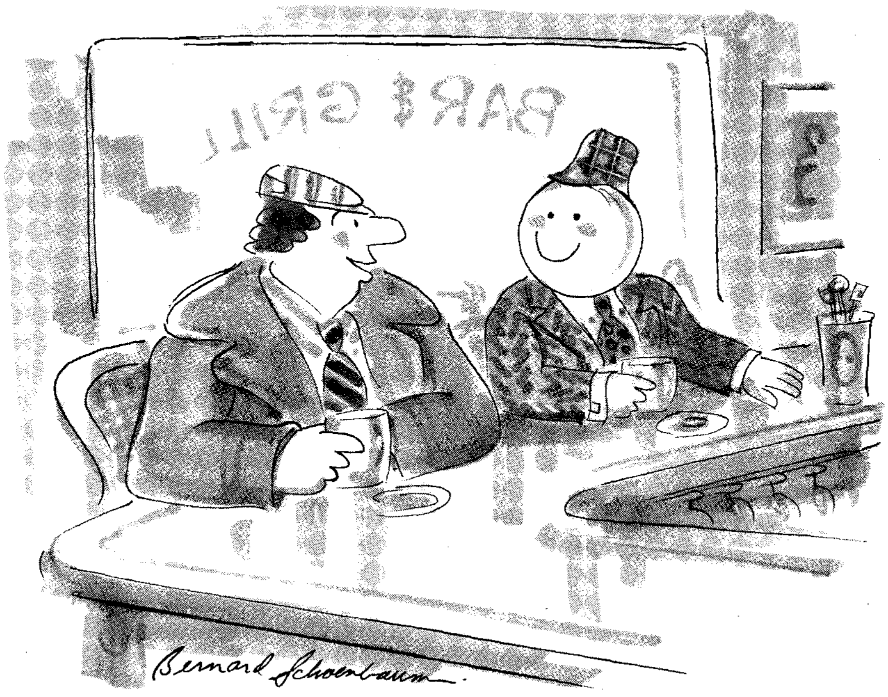
Simon leans toward me. "What's wrong?"

"Big Ma's dead. She was killed in that bus accident we saw this morning."

Simon and I walk over and each put a hand on one of Kwan's shoulders. She feels so small.

"I'm sorry," Simon stammers.

Kwan gives him a teary smile. As Li Bin-bin's closest relative, she has volunteered to perform the necessary bureaucratic ritual of bringing the body back to the village the next day. The three of us are returning to Guilin.



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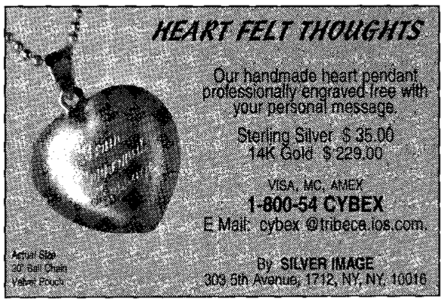
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As soon as Rocky sees us, he stubs out his cigarette and turns off the car radio. Someone must have told him the news. "What a tragedy," he says. "I'm sorry, big sister, I should have stopped. I'm to blame—"

Kwan waves off his apologies. "No one's to blame. Anyway, regrets are useless, always too late."

When Rocky opens the car door, we see that the owl is still in his cage on the backseat. Kwan lifts the cage gently and stares at the bird. "No need to climb the mountain anymore," she says. She sets the cage on the ground, then opens its door. The owl sticks out his head, hops to the edge of the doorway and onto the ground. He twists his head and, with a great flap of wings, takes off toward the peaks. Kwan watches him until he disappears.

As Rocky warms the engine, I ask Kwan, "When we passed the bus accident this morning, did you see someone who looked like Big Ma? Is that how you knew she'd died?"

"What are you saying? I didn't know she was dead until I saw her yin self standing by the wall."

"Then why did you tell her that you knew?"

Kwan frowns, puzzled. "I knew what?"

"You were telling her you knew, in your heart you knew it was true. Weren't you talking about the accident?"

"Ah," she says, understanding at last. "No, not the accident." She sighs. "I told Big Ma that what *she* was saying was true."

"What did she say?"

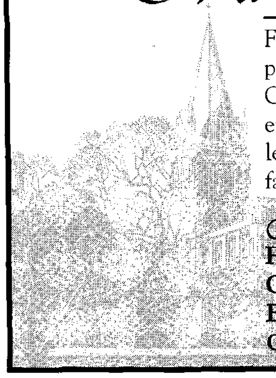
Kwan turns to the window, and I can see the reflection of her stricken face. "She said she was wrong about the story of Young Girl's Wish. She said all my wishes had already come true. She was always sorry she sent me away. But she could never tell me this. Otherwise, I wouldn't have left her for a chance at a better life."

I search for some way to console Kwan. "At least you can still see her," I say.

"Ah?"

"I mean as a yin person. She can visit you."

Kwan stares out the car window. "But it's not the same. We can no longer make new memories together. We can't change the past. Not until the next lifetime." She exhales heavily, releasing all her unsaid words. ♦



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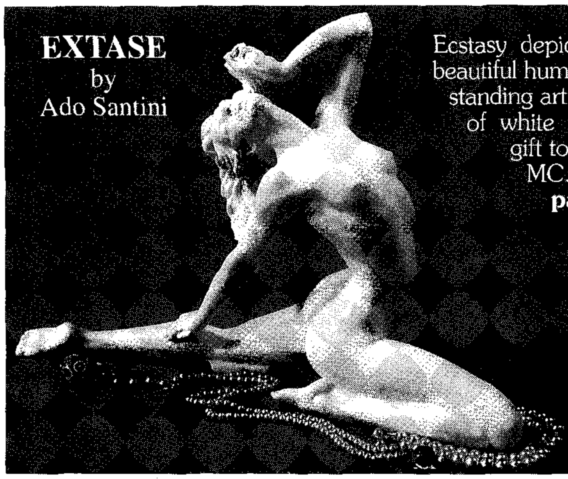

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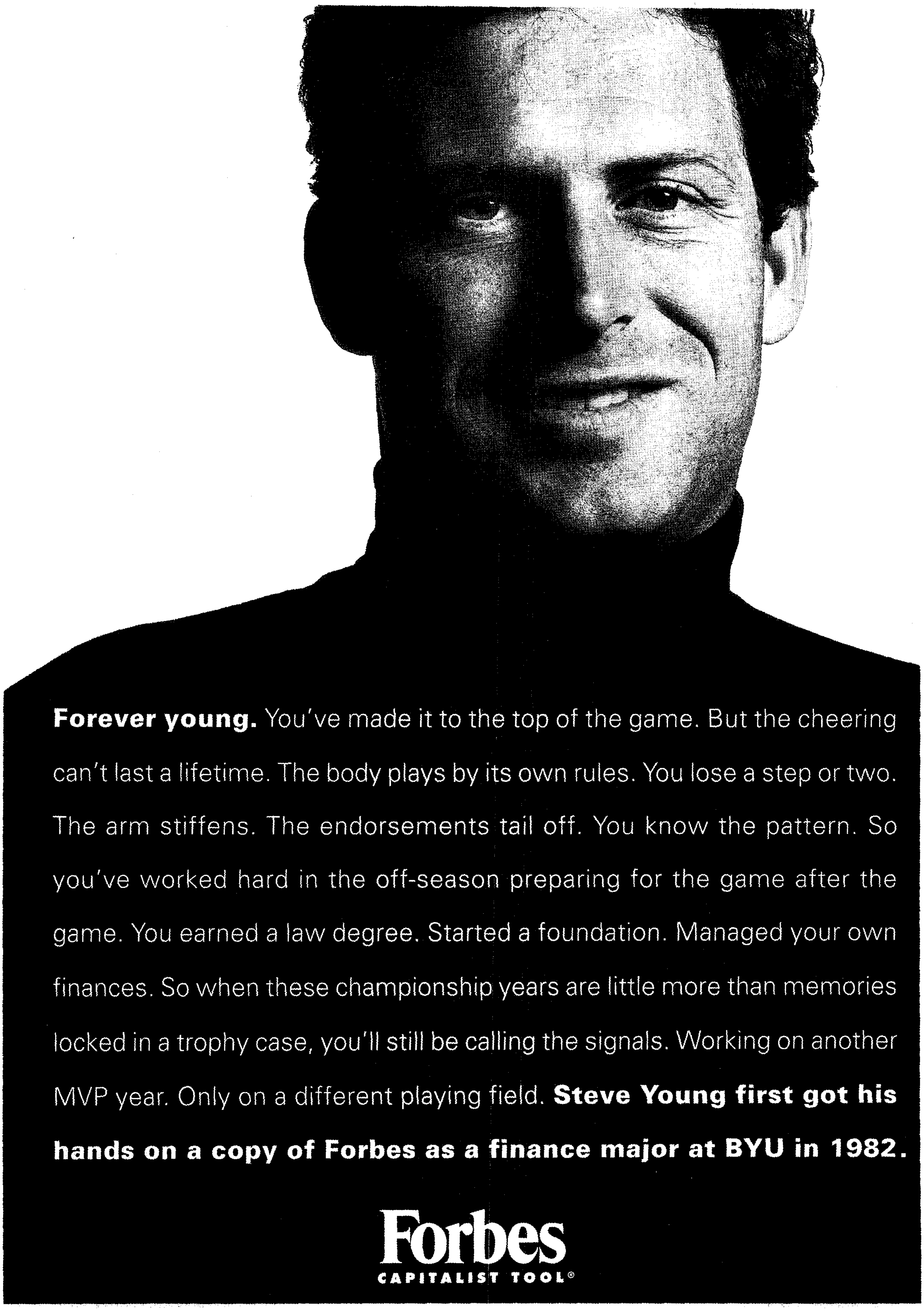

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According to Dinesh D'Souza, racism is history.

BY SEAN WILENTZ

RACE matters. Much of the amazingly successful history of the modern Republican Party hinges on this elementary truth. In 1964, Barry Goldwater cast his Senate vote against the Civil Rights Act and made a run for the Presidency by appealing to Southern whites, who bitterly opposed desegregation and Martin Luther King, Jr. Goldwater, whose candor is legendary, called it "hunting where the ducks are." The nation at large repudiated Goldwater's candidacy, but he won five states in the previously impregnable Democratic South.

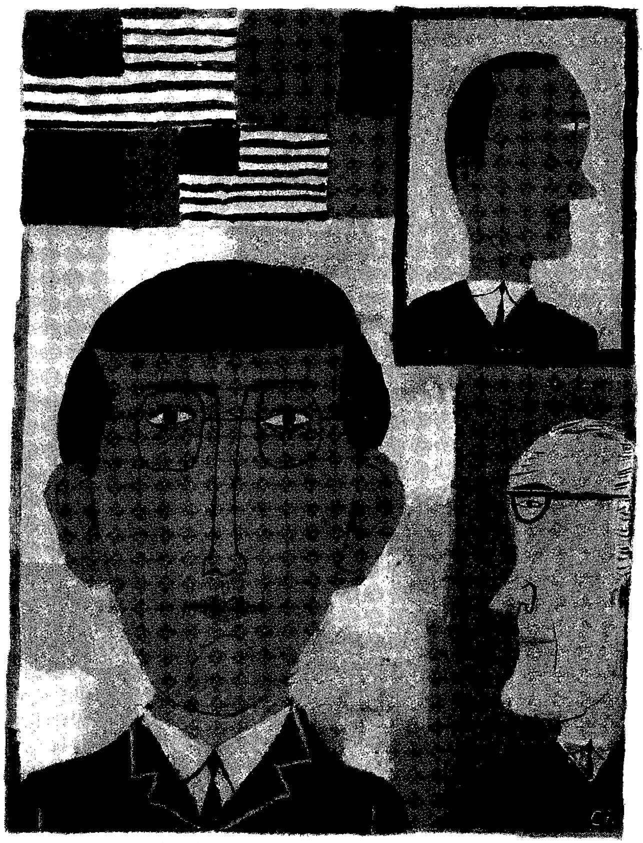
Soon afterward, duck hunting became known more politely (and somewhat inaccurately) as the Southern strategy: a top-down Republican populism that exploited the anger of middle- and working-class whites, North and South, against the allegedly libertine tax-and-spend Democrats and their black political clients. Richard Nixon, whose cynicism looked like the soul of racial moderation in some Republican circles, deployed the strategy brilliantly. As President, he expanded affirmative-action programs, but at election time he played the race card like a Vegas sharp. "It was subtler than code words," Nixon's domestic adviser John Ehrlichman recalls. "It was, 'I am on your side, I am going to deal with it in a way you'll approve of.' "

In 1980, Ronald Reagan kicked off his Presidential campaign in Philadelphia, Mississippi, where the civil-rights workers Chaney, Goodman, and Schwerner had been murdered, in 1964; and he proclaimed to the cameras and a sea of white faces that he stood squarely behind "states' rights," which everybody knew was the white supremacists' old rallying cry. Eight years later, Lee Atwater saved his boss George Bush's flagging campaign by making the black rapist and murderer Willie Horton a household name. Now we have Republican hopefuls like Bob Dole and Pete Wilson, who have suddenly seen the light about the evils of affirmative action. Perhaps they have, or perhaps they have merely opened the tried-and-true Republican playbook.

Dinesh D'Souza's long new study, "The End of Racism" (Free Press; $30), sidesteps this history. D'Souza, a former Reagan policy analyst and the author of the best-selling "Illiberal Education," cannot plead ignorance, for he has spent his entire adulthood hanging around the Republican right. Yet his book, a mélange of history, sociology, and policy recommendations, conjures up a contemporary America in which the only racists who matter are Afrocentric black nationalists, abetted by the liberal cultural élite. In fact, apart from a largely apologetic chapter on Charles Murray and Richard Herrnstein's "The Bell Curve," D'Souza is remarkably reticent about the ample political wave band between Marian Wright Edelman and David Duke. It is a strange thing for a conservative book on history and politics to include so little about modern conservatives, who, after all, have had more than a thing or two to say about running the country during the past quarter century. But that is only one of the strange and screwy things about "The End of Racism."

The book's principal argument is that liberals have purposely exaggerated both the history and the persistence of racism in America. They have done so, D'Souza says, in order to bolster an ideology that holds racism to be the main problem confronting blacks. D'Souza ascribes this ideology partly to those he calls "race merchants"—politicians, academics, and bureaucrats whose livelihoods depend on denouncing discrimination even where it no longer exists. But the main defects of liberal antiracism, he says, are political and intellectual, and they stem from the twin evils of liberal dogma: cultural relativism and big-government paternalism.

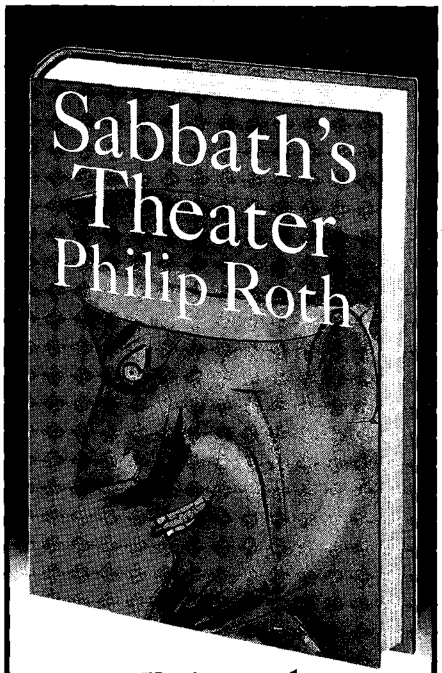
Blinded by cultural relativism, liberals have either ignored or excused what D'Souza calls the cultural pathologies and "civilizational" inferiorities of black Americans. And, blinded by big-government paternalism, liberals have failed to see that the best guarantor of the public welfare is private enterprise in an unregulated market. The results, he says, have been disastrous. Indulged by liberal ideologues, black Americans have developed one of their most destructive pathologies, a heavy dependence on government. In sum, liberalism, not racism, is the true enemy of blacks today.



D'Souza (left), King, and Goldwater. The author gives an unusual reading of the civil-rights era.

CALEF BROWN

IN order to lay the blame for today's racial turmoil on liberals, D'Souza offers a sweeping



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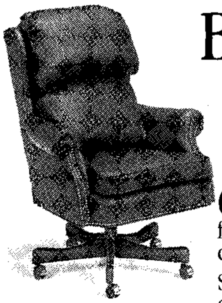

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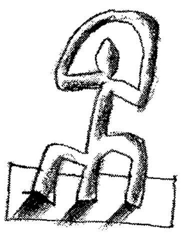
review of American race relations since the nation's founding. It is a liberal commonplace that present-day racial inequity reflects past injustices—a commonplace that D'Souza subjects to a double assault. Not content to dispute liberals' beliefs about the salience of contemporary racism, he goes on to attack the underpinnings of those beliefs, by showing that liberals have greatly exaggerated the severity and scope of racism in American history. The result of his efforts is to supplant one set of distortions with another. D'Souza's handling of the framing of the Constitution is typical. He says, correctly, that it is a misrepresentation to depict the Framers as racists who preached liberty but tolerated slavery. Unquestionably, some of the delegates in Philadelphia, including Benjamin Franklin and Alexander Hamilton, were avowed antislavery men, and the Constitutional Convention involved hard-fought compromises over slavery—negotiated, as D'Souza says, in order to insure that the Southern states would join the Union. Yet D'Souza seems to be unaware of just how hard a bargain the Southern delegates struck. He never mentions the three-fifths clause, which secured the slaveholders' power in national politics; nor does he mention the clause on fugitive bondsmen, which effectively recognized slavery as a protected American institution; and he seems to think that the Framers committed Congress to closing the overseas slave trade in 1808, which they did not. D'Souza's assertion that the Constitution actually weakened slavery is preposterous.

On the subject of slavery itself, D'Souza is deeply impressed by the fact that before the Civil War a handful of Southern free blacks owned slaves—a fact that he says "calls into question the facile equation of racism and slavery." This is a little like questioning whether the United States has a market economy because of the existence of the Tennessee Valley Authority. American slavery may have originated as a labor system, as D'Souza says, and not a system of racial subjugation, but it quickly turned into both—a point that D'Souza, after much hemming and hawing, finally comes around to acknowledging. (He might want to alert his publisher, who is suavely promoting "The End of Racism" in part as a challenge to the idea that "slavery was a racist institution.") Among Southern whites, whose skin color was a guarantee of freedom, racism squared the institution of slavery with the nation's democratic principles by creating, in effect, a white man's democracy.



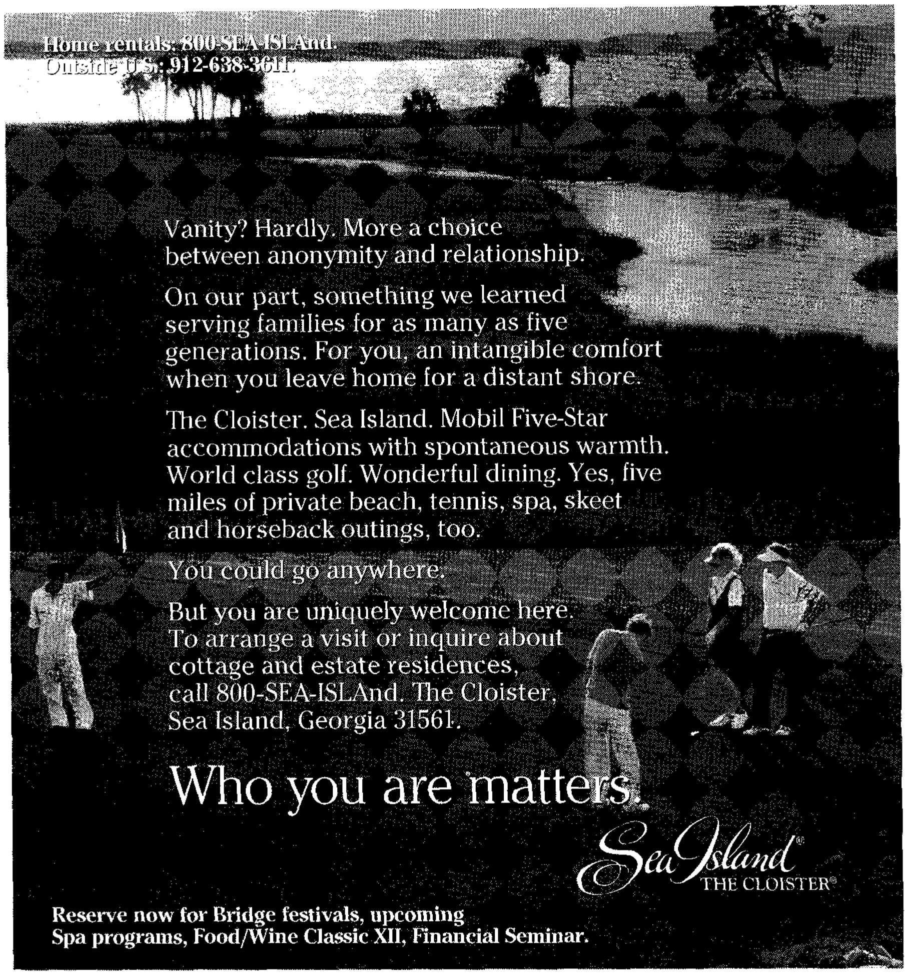
Describing the rise of Southern segregation at the end of the nineteenth century, D'Souza distinguishes between "radical racists," who wanted to harass and humiliate blacks, and patrician "paternalists," who believed that blacks were inferior but wanted to insulate them from the radicals and allow them "to develop their allegedly modest talents in peace and among their own kind." So liberals gravely overstate the evils of segregation, he maintains, when they fail to acknowledge that the system had an essentially paternalist character, and was created by élite conservatives who were "appalled by . . . vulgar displays of bloodthirstiness." From this we are supposed to conclude that segregation was not established by white racists for the purpose of oppressing blacks but, rather, was designed in part "to *protect* blacks."

Obviously the postbellum South conformed to the rule that the better sort always have a high opinion of themselves. But paternalist segregation was not nearly as gentlemanly as D'Souza suggests. Although Southern paternalists prided themselves on their elevated sense of Christian duty, they helped design segregation as a system not only of racial separation but of economic domination—an efficient method (in line with the emerging Progressive cult of efficiency) of preserving social peace while maintaining a cheap, ignorant, and pliable labor force. For most blacks the system entailed a life of grinding poverty and degrading dependence on propertied whites as well as racial stigmatization. (Segregation didn't do much for poor whites, either, but that's another story.) Meanwhile, between 1909 and 1918, the heroic phase of paternalist segregation, nearly seven hundred blacks—a rate well above one a week—were lynched in the South with virtual impunity.

D'Souza has his own worries about segregation: he's dismayed by what he sees as its interference with laissez-faire commerce. This was not a concern shared by the South's plantation owners, manufacturers, and mining companies. They found nothing inefficient about segregation; on the contrary, they lived quite happily with the system (indeed, they helped to install it), because it minimized labor costs, discouraged bothersome popular movements from below, and guaranteed the stable political power of local white élites. D'Souza focusses on a few white streetcar operators who complained, to no avail, about the needless expense and inconvenience of separating the races: he claims that they "mounted the only significant, albeit unsuccessful, opposition" to segregation. In fact, the system's chief opponents were blacks, including the New Orleans black citizens' committee that launched the case leading to the famous 1896 Supreme Court decision Plessy v. Ferguson, which established the principle of "separate but equal."

D'Souza's most bizarre historical passages concern the civil-rights movement, which he views as a flawed effort to remove racial distinctions from American law. Although it upheld what he calls the "color-blind" principles of Martin Luther King, Jr., he says, the movement's ideas about race were tainted by the doctrines of anthropological relativism. Misled into believing that all cultures were equal, the civil-rights reformers were supposedly shocked when, after the demise of segregation, blacks did not perform at the same levels as whites in school and business. And, to make things worse, civil-rights leaders and their liberal allies tried to correct for black failure by rigging the system with race-based programs like affirmative action. King himself, D'Souza claims, saw the limitations of relativism and tried to encourage blacks to rid themselves of their self-destructive habits. But King was killed, and his successors went on to betray his color-blind dream by creating racial preferences.

D'Souza is not the first conservative to claim King as an ally, but his description of the man and of the civil-rights movement is particularly shallow and self-serving. On the matter of color blindness: Neither King nor the other civil-rights leaders imagined that they were fighting simply to end segregation and other forms of legal discrimination. The historic March on Washington in 1963 was formally called a march "for jobs and freedom," not a march for color-blind laws. Moreover, Bayard Rustin, A. Philip Randolph,



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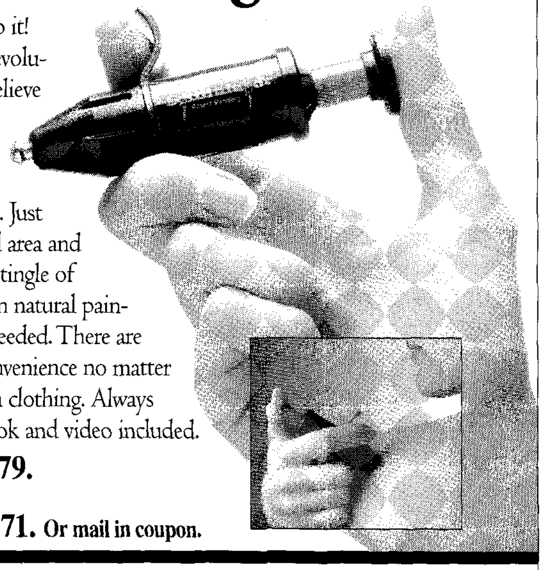

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and the others who, with King, led that march knew all too well that, after nearly three hundred and fifty years of slavery and segregation, blacks were severely deficient in education, job skills, and capital formation as well as housing and other day-to-day material goods; and they did not flinch from facing up to self-destructive behavior by blacks. The problem, as civil-rights leaders saw it, was not whether blacks, as a group, had deficiencies but how best to remedy them.

One of those remedies was racial preferences, which the integrationist King actually supported, as one element of a much larger vision of reform. Near the beginning of his career, King did write as if blacks, once free of segregation, would be able to lift themselves up by their own bootstraps. But early in the sixties he concluded that the obstacles to advancement were so deeply entrenched that self-help efforts would be doomed without an ambitious federal plan for abolishing slums and integrating blacks into the economic mainstream—including what he called "compensatory or preferential treatment for the Negro." King explicitly rejected the laissez-faire ethic that "The End of Racism" imputes to him; what shocked King and others was not black "failure" but the nation's failure to carry out the sort of comprehensive reform he felt was necessary.

D'SOUZA does discover one happy development coincident with the civil-rights era—a decline in white racism. (He is elusive about how and why the decline occurred; readers might come away thinking that it just sort of *happened.*) Aside from a few marginal hate groups, he says, white racism has all but vanished. What might look like racism is, rather, what he calls "rational discrimination," based on whites' perfectly legitimate fears that blacks will stick them up, default on loans, or otherwise cause them harm. To D'Souza, charges of institutional racism are weak excuses for blacks' collective failures, and reappear in order to keep the race merchants in business. Instead of dwelling on the racial oppressions of the past, blacks ought to clean up their act and get on with the job of becoming orderly, productive citizens.

White attitudes toward race have certainly improved since the nineteen-sixties, more than some liberals admit. Still, centuries-old patterns of prejudice usually take more than a few decades to uproot. One reason D'Souza is so optimistic about the decline of white racism is that he defines racism very narrowly, as a belief in the genetic inferiority of blacks. Because far fewer white Americans today publicly endorse that belief than did so in the nineteen-forties, D'Souza sees white racism as nearing extinction. (One wonders if "The Bell Curve" has reversed the trend.) Actually, numerous reliable studies show that even while whites voice egalitarian sentiments about integrated schools and workplaces, they continue to discriminate against blacks in hiring and (especially) housing, and still show a propensity to regard blacks as lazier, less intelligent, and more violent than any other ethnic group. D'Souza's reply is: What of it? These discriminations are rational and justified responses to genuine black pathologies. It is a matter, he writes, of "better safe than sorry." Or, to put it more bluntly, that's the way blacks really are.

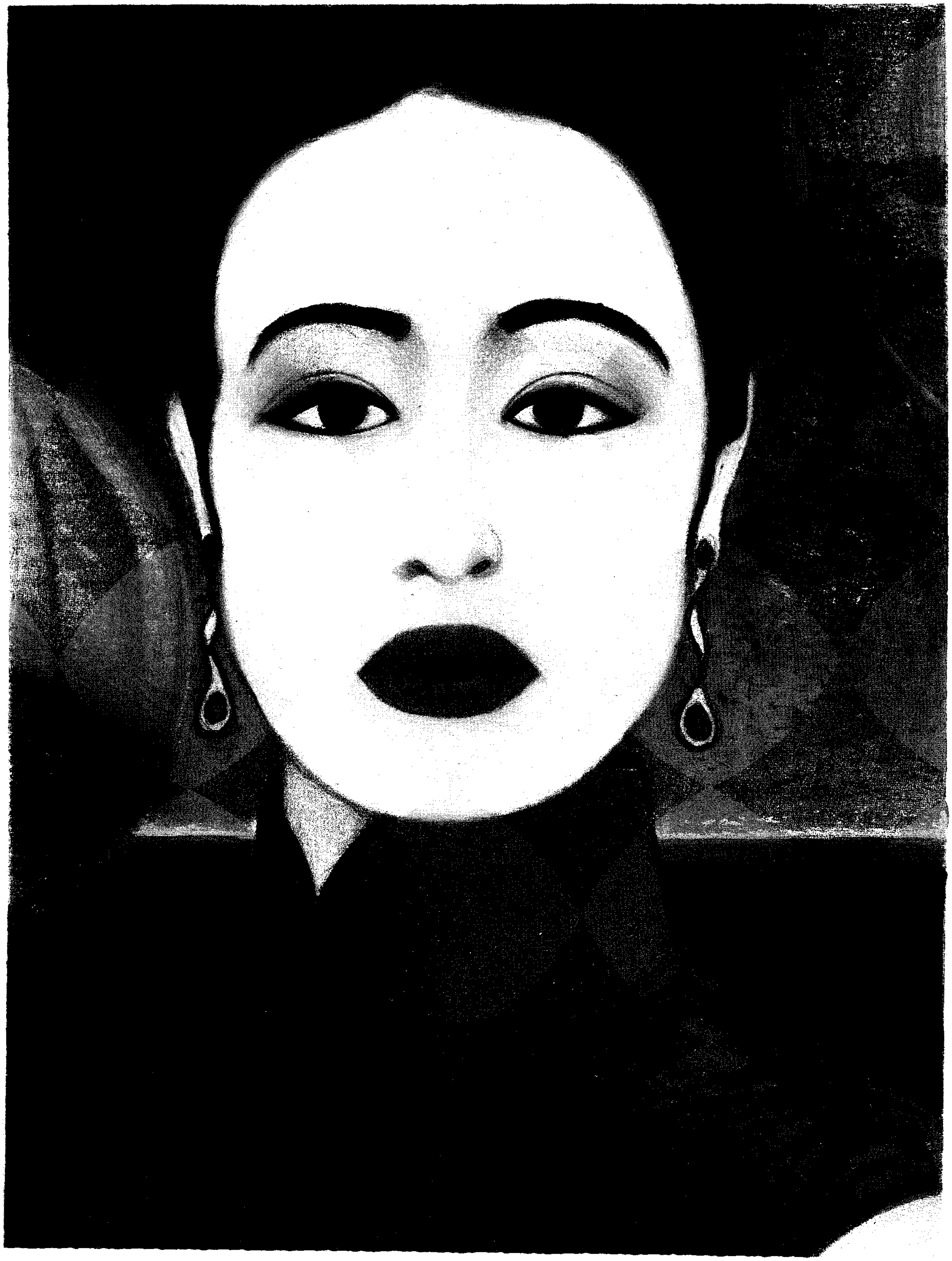
D'Souza thus leaves his readers to ponder the rationality of whites and the pathologies of blacks. Liberals certainly err when they simply equate race-based discrimination with racism. The Haitian cabdriver who passes by a young black fare may well be motivated by rational self-interest, not bigotry. But there is no reason to suppose that such rationality governs most racial discrimination in this country.

In any case, racial inequity is not simply a matter of attitudes. D'Souza is quick to dismiss institutional racism as "a nonsense phrase," mainly because he seems never to have learned what the phrase actually means. The Social Security system is a fair example of the broader phenomenon. In designing the system, during the nineteen-thirties, Congress, at the explicit insistence of Southern representatives, excluded certain occupational categories in which blacks were heavily represented—most notably, agricultural labor and domestic service—and the system remained that way into the fifties. To this day, a generation of laborers and servants and their families are paying the cumulative price for that exclusion. Or take the question of discrimination in the mortgage market, which D'Souza treats at some length. According to him, the discrimination that occurs among private lenders is rational, partly because, at all income levels, blacks have far less net wealth than whites do. Yet here is another instance where what is rational winds up replicating past discrimination, for a family's net wealth is directly attributable to its inheritance and previous home ownership.

What, then, of the cultural pathologies that D'Souza views as the cause of "rational discrimination against blacks"? Inquiries into these matters cannot be dismissed as prima facie racist. It would be strange if the experience of slavery and segregation had *not* left behind some pathologies in black American culture (although, like racism, such pathologies are subject to change). Nor can anyone deny the high rates of interpersonal violence among blacks since emancipation. But a discussion of pathologies needs to be informed by evidence that carefully distinguishes between what is normative and what is merely common.

Unfortunately, D'Souza's presentation is shifty and confusing. Sometimes he talks about a unitary black culture, which is "the product not of a physiological likeness but of a shared history," and is largely defined by the urban underclass. At other times, he talks about two distinct cultural groups: one tangled up in pathology, the other decent, hard-working, humane, and law-abiding. But, because he never attempts any sustained analysis of the structure and internal workings of contemporary black American society, he says nothing about *which* black America has come to represent the norm. In fact, a plurality of black Americans are solidly working-class—people largely ignored in all the debates on race today. And most of what D'Souza calls the black pathologies amount to an underclass morality that the majority of black Americans reject.

Nor does D'Souza convincingly connect black pathologies to black history. Some of what he sees as the characteristic black pathologies—racial paranoia, improper speech, the heroizing of violent outlaws, dependence on government—might be described as variations of broader and persistent *national* traits. (Throughout the book, D'Souza treats poor blacks as if they have lived in complete isolation from the rest of America.) And the pathology that D'Souza describes as "perhaps the most serious"—the rising rate of illegitimate childbirth—appears even in his own account to have developed only over the past thirty years, a period in which the illegitimacy rate rose among whites as well (although, to be sure, not



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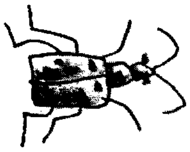
to the same level). We are left to wonder why black *culture* is responsible for such a recent development.

If D'Souza's arguments about pathology and "rational discrimination" have a familiar ring, they ought to: ever since emancipation, commentators have justified drawing generalizations about "the Negro" on the basis of the thuggery and vice of the black underclass. Yet such arguments cannot be completely dismissed as a conservative ploy. Are there devastating and, apparently, self-perpetuating problems of crime, violence, addiction, and broken families among poor blacks, and especially poor young blacks in big cities? Yes, and it is a national scandal as well as a measure of inner-city moral and institutional decay. Is there reason to think that young black men in big cities are prone to antisocial behavior? Yes, and they themselves, along with their black neighbors, are by far the most frequent victims—a circumstance that makes the situation all the more grim. Is fighting racial discrimination the solution to black poverty? Hardly, for even if racism vanished tomorrow, the black poor would still be jobless, and the black underclass would still be largely unemployable. (Economics also matters.)

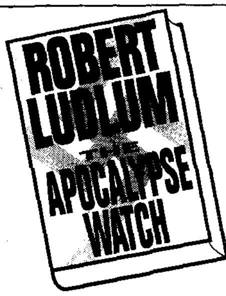
Finally, are there voices, some of them influential, that live in the past and lay the blame for the difficulties blacks face on an exaggerated white racism? Yes, especially in black communities and in the universities, and there is plenty here for D'Souza to criticize. He has an easy time assembling a small mountain of snippets from black racists, P.C. multiculturalists, AIDS-conspiracy kooks, embittered black professors, guilt-ridden whites, and many others who half believe what these voices say. Theirs is a frame of mind which imagines that poverty and discrimination release blacks from moral and intellectual accountability, and turns a posture of certitude about white hostility into a self-fulfilling prophecy. D'Souza has an especially merry time scoring direct hits on the seemingly endless parade of earnest academic egalitarians who in protesting any imposition of "white" or "Western" values on blacks ironically end up consigning all blacks to a cultural backwater, in a kind of unconscious liberal colonialism.



All the same, D'Souza's portrait of his foes has its problems. As he occasionally acknowledges, liberal views on race are far from monolithic. Sister Souljah is not in the White House; the Democrat in the White House is a liberal antiracist who told her off. And many black liberals are trying to confront honestly the crisis in the inner cities. The main trouble with these people, in D'Souza's view, is that in proposing a large federal role in attacking the crisis they have failed to wean themselves from big-government liberal dogma (which is to say that they sustain the spirit of Dr. King's proposals from the sixties).

WHAT, then, is D'Souza's alternative, and what does it augur? In passing, he gestures to job training and other forms of government aid, but for the most part he would leave black America to fend for itself. His major proposals concern affirmative action and anti-discrimination laws. In a tortuously worded passage, he says that racial preferences were "perhaps necessary and inevitable in the late 1960s," in order to end discrimination (leaving readers to wonder why he earlier denounced their introduction as a devious betrayal). But now, he says, the old discrimination is over, and affirmative action merely perpetuates relaxed standards and racial favoritism. He would abolish it outright—if not immediately, then within fifteen years. He would also repeal the provisions of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 which ban discrimination in the private sector, in order to give the market free rein in our new post-racist world.

By itself, affirmative action is no substitute for the kind of transracial initiatives that Rustin and King had in mind thirty years ago, and, like any system involving money and power, it has been open to abuse. Still, ending affirmative action completely would almost certainly diminish the number of blacks in middle-class jobs—especially in government, where affirmative-action guidelines are particularly strong—and so harm precisely those blacks whom D'Souza would presumably like to encourage. Unleashing "rational discrimination" in private employment, retail service, and housing isn't exactly what either black or white Americans need at the moment, and would only further lower national morale and further heighten racial tensions, especially when the first fast-food franchise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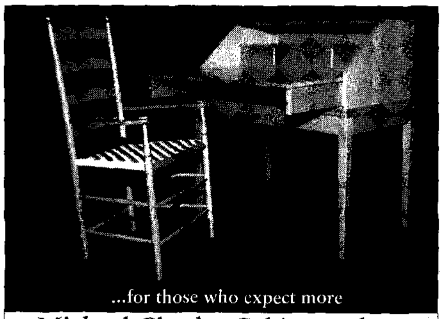
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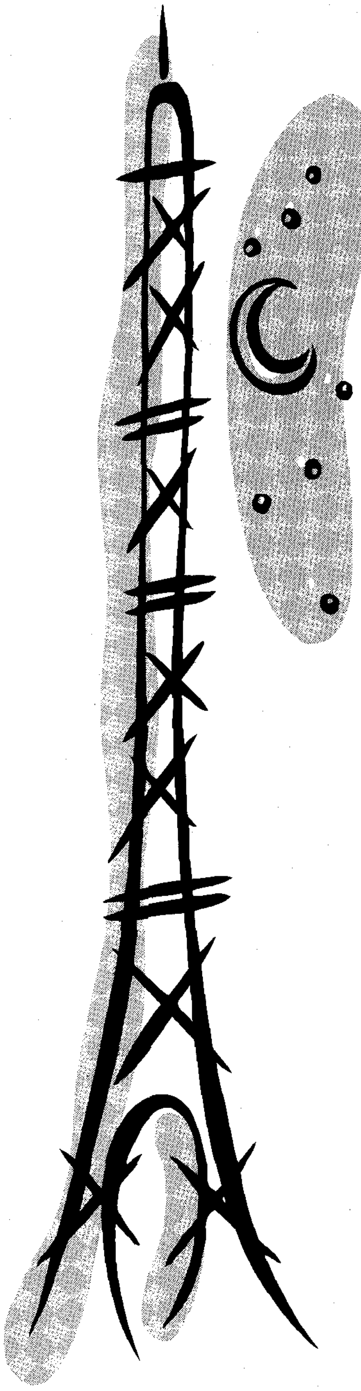
or tony suburban shopping mall or walled community announces its exciting new "whites only" policy. (Contrary to D'Souza's sanguine view of the free market, racial discrimination can be highly cost-effective.) D'Souza's proposals wouldn't do much for white workers, either, since proportionally they have far less to gain from scrapping programs like affirmative action than blacks have to lose.

D'Souza tells only half the story of our racial travails, and that obliquely. The part that he does describe is the tragedy of modern liberalism, especially that of the Democratic Party. It is the story of how liberals of the nineteen-sixties, flushed with pride, political idealism, and confidence in an ever-expanding economy, undertook a crusade to end poverty and racial discrimination by redistributing income and status. That crusade faltered, racked by inner-city riots, the rise of separatist black-power politics, the controversies over school busing and other feats of social engineering, the cultural struggles of the Vietnam War years, and the decline (and then stagnation) of national economic growth. On the defensive over issues like crime in the streets, liberals continued to think and act as if "fairness" were mainly a matter of advancing the fortunes of previously excluded noble minorities. They succeeded in helping to foster the rise of a sizable, if fragile, black middle class, but in doing so they left themselves vulnerable to charges that they had forsaken the traditional white middle- and working-class rank and file in favor of blacks; and much of that traditional rank and file forsook them. Thereafter, the liberal intelligentsia, never free from arrogance and now embittered by fate, stumbled into a woozy and self-righteous multiculturalism, which had nothing of value to offer poor blacks and harbored a sour contempt for middle- and working-class whites. And the black underclass grew.

The other half of the story, the half that D'Souza does not tell, is the tragedy of modern conservatism—especially that of the Republican Party. Happy to capitalize on their rivals' exposed weaknesses, conservative politicians seized upon race as a "wedge" issue, talking in a racial code, writing off what was still a substantial black Republican vote, abandoning the legacy of the Party of Lincoln, and laying the responsibility for white economic and social anxieties at the feet of élitist,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big-spending, black-loving Democrats. The old white racism was stigmatized, but conservative rhetoric augmented and manipulated "rational discrimination," by telling increasingly hard-pressed working people that their taxes were being wasted on "welfare queens," along with the rest of the undeserving black poor. Depicting blacks as a chief cause of white misery was one of the oldest strokes in American politics, and it worked wonders for the rich in the Reagan years by giving them the lion's share of new tax breaks. While the strategy did nothing to allay the economic difficulties and fears of those on the lower half of the income ladder, it thoroughly racialized national politics. And the black underclass grew.

From time to time, aggravating racial resentment has made successful Republicans squeamish. After the 1988 elections, George Bush tried to squirm out of responsibility for his campaign's tactics with what has become a familiar American refrain: "That's history." But, while Bush has consigned his acts to history, D'Souza consigns them to oblivion, as if the Southern strategy has had nothing to do with the story of race and racism in our time. "The End of Racism" sings the praises of Martin Luther King but offers what amounts to an updated version of Barry Goldwater's old civil-rights program, an alibi for national indifference. Its faulty account of American history is potentially destructive, its sociology of American culture is deficient, its neglect of conservative racial posturing is shameless, and its policy prescriptions are ominous. In short, it is a mirror of our racial politics. Meanwhile, summer is over, a new semester has started, and duck-hunting season is just around the corner. ♦

SCRIPTURE RESCRIPTED

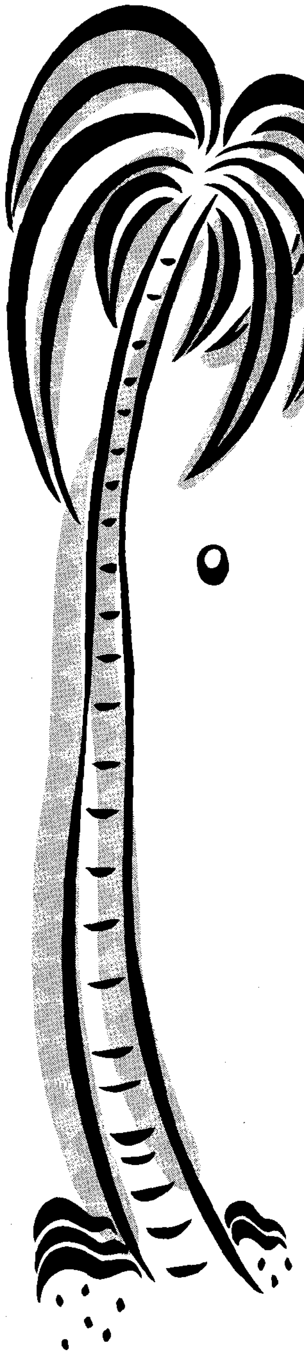
In a new version, the Bible goes P.C.

BY ANTHONY LANE

FILIP PAGOWSKI

THESE are dark days, if you happen to be God. Not only are the peoples of the earth writhing in sin, as per usual, and taking your name in vain, but some of them are wondering whether your name was the right one in the first place. "The New Testament and Psalms: An Inclusive Version" (Oxford; $14.95) gets itself into a dreadful pickle over the precise etiquette of worship. Like a teen-ager who doesn't know what to call his friends' parents, the editors of this brave new project are torn between shyness and presumption in the face of a superior being. "God" will do, but "Lord" is a no-no, because it reminds us of iniquitous social hierarchies. "Master" is even worse. As for "King," well, forget it. No one that closely involved with the male-monarchical-military complex is going to make *them* drop to their knees.

The editorial board of the Inclusive Version is composed of six American experts: Bishop Thomas L. Hoyt, Jr., Barbara A. Withers, and four eminent professors—Sharon H. Ringe, Victor Roland Gold, Susan Brooks Thistlethwaite, and Burton H. Throckmorton, Jr. (who sounds as if he should be played by Groucho Marx). Their joint beef is the conviction that an entrenched terminology is blocking our access to the Almighty. Words that are sticky with racial, sexual, and physical prejudice have bleared our vision for too long. Clear a pathway, therefore, and we shall see God, for the first time, in all His glory. Correction: in all *God's* glory. The pronoun "His" suggests a masculine presence, whereas the true deity is neither male nor female—it encompasses and goes beyond both to find a higher, genderless perfection, like RuPaul. The problem for the



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editors of the Inclusive Version is that they have a much nicer time finding fault than correcting it. Their solution to the sex conundrum, for instance, may not enjoy quite the universal appeal that they intend:

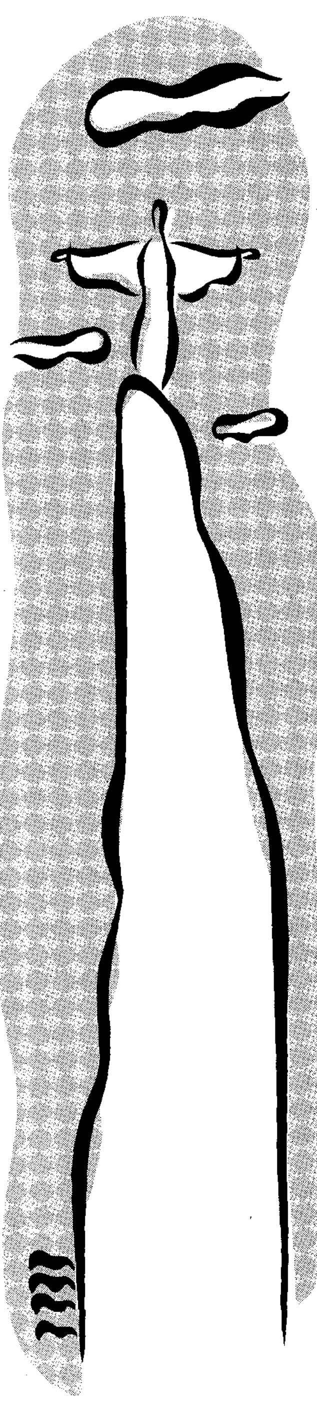
> Our Father-Mother in heaven,
> hallowed be your name.
> Your dominion come.

I guess that, over the years, those intoning the Lord's Prayer could learn to junk "kingdom" (with what the editors call its "blatantly androcentric and patriarchal character") and speak instead of "dominion." But will they ever come round to "Father-Mother"? In my view, the *moment critique* for this unwieldy phrase comes in the second chapter of Luke, when Jesus goes missing and is found by his worried parents—his mortal father and mother—in the temple: "Jesus said to them, 'Why were you searching for me? Did you not know that I must be in the house of my Father-Mother?' But they did not understand what Jesus said to them." I bet they didn't.

We have been here before, of course. There was scandal among the clerisy when William Tyndale published his translation of the New Testament in 1526 and thus opened it up to those of a vulgar tongue; he was arrested for heresy, strangled, and burned. When the Revised Version appeared, in 1885, many readers considered that it traduced rather more than it revised; more controversial still was the determinedly unpoetic New English Bible, which came out in 1961. If you are issuing a new version of the Good Book, a bad press is part of the deal. No one, as yet, has taken a match to the editors of the Inclusive Version, but they are generating a certain skeptical heat. I have to say, however, that, unlike Tyndale's, their work is not really worth dying for. For one thing, it is bare of artistic merit—its rhythms hobbled and halting, its variety of tone slightly below that of a mudflat. The heart does not leap at a text that takes the ingrained magnificence of John 1 and scours it down to such dull sentences as "The light shines in the deepest night, and the night did not overcome it" for fear that the mention of "darkness" might be construed as racially offensive. At such moments, refinement blurs into censorship—the censoring of the dead, who can't answer back. One hates to think where it will end. Imagine cutting out any mention of "dark" and "light" from "Paradise Lost"; you wouldn't have much left, except for an apple.

Even if the editors of the Inclusive Version are frightened of style, however, they do have the courage of their agenda. I don't find their work nearly as insulting as, say, the New English Bible, which forswore a language that the translators regarded as dead (but that was actually more alive than ever) in favor of one that they promoted as living (although in their hands it came out sounding dead). And some of the prescriptions in the Inclusive Version offer nourishing food for thought, especially among hungry pedants. There is the dictate, for example, that "The Blind" and "The Lame" should now be stretched out to "Those who are Blind" and "Those who are Lame," the idea being that we will no longer identify such persons purely by their impairment. I wasn't aware that we did such a thing in the first place; but if we did, the alteration doesn't solve the problem—it only serves to point up the disability. (In practical terms, at the frontier where ethics yield to daily discourse, this book is amazingly naïve.) Still, the trend could take off, in which case we can look forward to a new breed of spaghetti Western: "Those Who Are Good, Those Who Are Bad, and Those Who Are Facially Non-Privileged."

But we need to tread cautiously. It is worth turning to T. S. Eliot: "Those who talk of the Bible as a 'monument of English prose' are merely admiring it as a monument over the grave of Christianity," he wrote in 1935. In other words, we should not only deplore the literary wrecking of the Gospels but also escape the insidious danger of treating them simply *as* literature—the idle prerogative, to be blunt, of unbelievers. It is no coincidence that the strongest prose, at once the most compact and the most capacious, ever produced in England should have arisen at a time when society was most tenaciously rooted in the faith. There was a world within the Word. That is one reason why the King James Version, born largely of Tyndale and published with the encouragement of James I in 1611, has endured, and why subsequent efforts to update it, or to dump it altogether and start again, feel doomed from the start: no one can pre-



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tend that our language hasn't changed (and change need not always mean decay), but neither can one deny that under social pressure it has peeled away from religion. Trying to stick it back is futile; and the effort to claim "relevance" for any version of the Bible smacks of sheer historical vanity—a delusion that the word of God should somehow try to keep up with us, crank itself up to our level, rather than the other way around.

A key piece of evidence provided by the editors of the Inclusive Version in support of their innovations comes from an unusual source. "Even Star Trek now boldly goes 'where *no one* has gone before,' " they remind us. I am not wholly convinced that the presentation of sacred texts should be founded on the credo of a spaceship. There is nothing wrong with the principles that animate the Inclusive Version; whether they are *religious* principles is another matter. As Jesus himself said, "In vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men." The queasy, unbalanced sensation that rocks you as you read the book comes, I think, from the sight of such immutable spiritual guidance being overrun by a squad of temporary secular ambitions. When "bloodguiltiness," in Psalm 51, is coarsened to "bloodshed"; when the moral breadth, the gentleness—and, incidentally, the unassailable political correctness—of I Corinthians 7 ("Let the husband render unto the wife due benevolence") dwindles to simple law-talk ("The husband should give to his wife her conjugal rights"); when the saintly Phoebe, who bears Paul's Epistle to the Romans, is upgraded from "a servant of the church" to "a deacon," thus demolishing any lingering doubts about the ordination of women: whenever the editors make these changes, they are not bringing Good News but angling for the enlightenment of our present society. (They may, of course, see nothing to choose between the two.) To be honest, I was deeply disappointed that they had chosen to retain the line from Psalm 74 "Why does your anger smoke against the sheep of your pasture?" What with all the work they put in against racial discrimination in the Bible, you'd have thought they could have declared it a non-smoking zone as well.

We find it easy to scorn the politically correct, and to forget the injustices that they originally set out to mend; but they probably have enough to worry about in the terrestrial sphere without needing to check all outgoing hosannas as well. I read through the new, clean-living Gospels and felt not purified but rather desperate to put these earthly grammatical squabbles behind me. They are important, but not all-important, and we should take care not to be consumed within their fires. If you want to see what happens when the urge to modernize gets out of hand and turns into wild-eyed impatience, I refer you to a recently published collection of essays entitled "The Postmodern Bible" (Yale; $35). This is a production of the Bible and Culture Collective, and it makes the Inclusive Version read like a third-century papyrus dug out of Middle Eastern mud. On the inside back flap, members of the Collective are shown standing on a beach, wearing the broad smiles of those who can write chapters on Poststructuralist, Narratological, and Womanist criticism without pulling a muscle. They happily quote the psychoanalyst Luce Irigaray, who outstrips the Inclusive Version in her scorn for patriarchal religions. "Nothing is said of a God the Mother or of God made Woman, or even of God as a couple or couples," she writes. It's a neat idea: Invite the Almighty to your dinner party! No need to fix him up with a date! The image of God shouting at himself about what channel to watch does not exactly strengthen our spiritual awe, but then the book is hardly in the business of devotion. It unpicks Biblical texts with such disdain that the thought of anyone actually believing in them—anyone dumb enough not to see through their rhetorical structures—is made to seem laughable.

Tennyson said that simple faith was more than Norman blood, but you come away from "The Postmodern Bible" feeling that simple faith *is* Norman blood—old, aggressive, and white. "We need to be liberated from the oppression of racism, classism, and sexism, that is, from patriarchy," argues the Collective. "The attention paid to Jesus' death diverts attention from that oppression." You wonder why they bother to read the Bible at all. Tyndale was killed for trying to spread the Word; these guys make a living out of deconstructing it to death. ♦

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MUSICAL EVENTS

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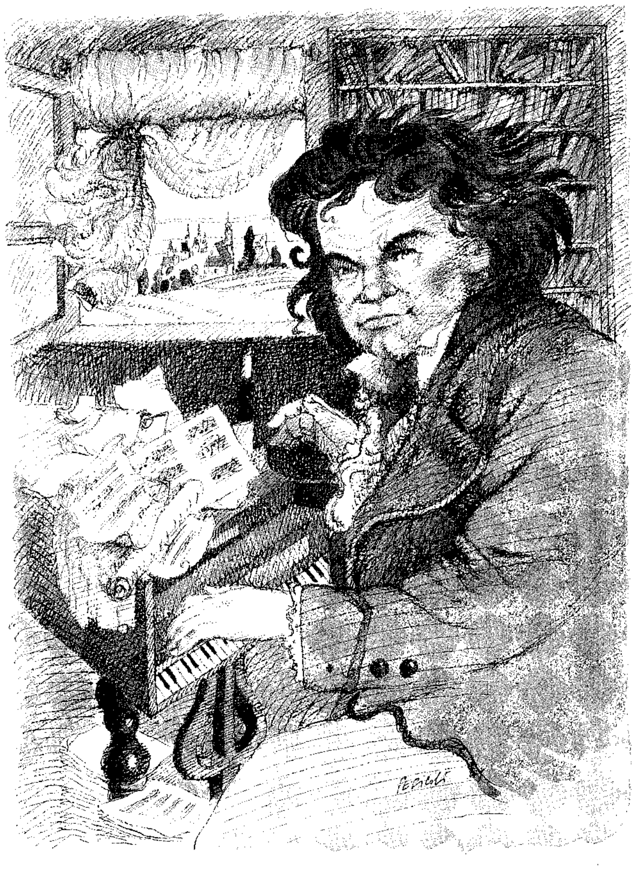
The new season will help us see the composer afresh.

BY PAUL GRIFFITHS

VERY soon now, on October 8th, something important will be happening at Carnegie Hall: an all-Beethoven program. What will make this an occasion isn't just that the performer will be the fearsomely gifted and fearlessly searching Maurizio Pollini, starting out on the complete cycle of Beethoven sonatas he'll be giving there this season, but, rather, that Beethoven's works, which so much define what Western music is, need to be continually reimagined, reheard, and reconsidered. It's right that the city's major musical institutions—Carnegie and the Philharmonic—should be looking again and afresh at Beethoven. The whole point of having classics is to have them played, and played often, so that they become familiar, and so that they become strange, too—strange in the manifoldness that different performances can begin to disclose.

The current wavering of belief in the classics—in the classics of music, as in those of literature—is understandable as a crisis in the exploration of the notion of freedom. It may also be helpful in enabling us to renegotiate our position with regard to the classics, to see them more as tools and spurs in our questioning of the world than as tables of the law, and so to value them more for their multiplicity and variability than for their historical prestige. It would, after all, be ironic if the pursuit of liberation and the rejection of authority were to lead us to repudiate Beethoven, in whose music those ideals are so signally set forth.

That doesn't mean we have to accept the myth of Beethoven the revolutionary without question or reserve. Tia DeNora, in her forthcoming book "Beethoven and the Construction of Genius" (California), argues that Beethoven's eminence in Western music is the achievement not just of a great genius but of a culture that wanted and goes on wanting greatness. However, if Beethoven's music is in some measure our fabrication, what we have created is a body of work that startles by its individual qualities of novelty, dynamism, roughness, and humor—by features that conjure the aural portrait of a man.



Performances of the complete sonatas and concertos: Beethoven's piano works take center stage in New York.

Of course, the man changes. The Beethoven of the nineteenth century isn't our Beethoven. With our greater knowledge of the diverse accomplishments of human societies, we're bound to see Beethoven's much vaunted universality as, to say the least, tempered by particular conditions of time and place. Nor do we have to accept the Romantic sleight of hand by which the essence of Beethoven was diagnosed as lying in the heroic individualism of the Third, Fifth, and Sixth Symphonies, the concertos, and "Fidelio," while the late works were wafted beyond comprehension.

Nevertheless, the success with which Beethoven's music has communicated itself—even in cultures that, like those of modern Japan or Korea, have few points of correspondence with the culture of imperial Vienna—might suggest that his language is, if not a fact of musical nature, certainly something that can be learned, and that people want to learn.

THE other day, browsing through some compact disks that had come into the office, I happened to move straight from a recording of Cambodian court music (a circulating melody on an oboelike instrument, heard through patterns of xylophones and percussion) to one of Robert Taub playing Beethoven's Opus 78 sonata. Nothing could have pointed up more swiftly what distinguishes Beethoven and, by extension, the Western tradition that his music helped form: in a word, transparency. You hear what's going on. Musical events are items in dialogues of response and courses of change. Thought is in motion. Though we might be reluctant to conclude that what we're hearing is Beethoven's thought, since the mercurial process that presents itself to us is so far from the laborious process by which we know Beethoven habitually made his pieces, still something here is speaking to us—and, by its speech, creating the curved time through which that speech is possible, creating the high, erratic instability of development passages, the settled relaxation of reprises. Something is engendering and then operating within a world utterly un-

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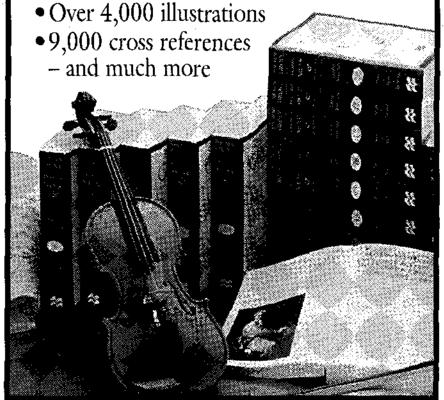

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like that of the evenly unfolding Cambodian music.

It remains possible that to a Cambodian the music of the court ensemble of Phnom Penh might be as lucid as Beethoven is (I like to think) to me. But we are at liberty to doubt this. For one thing, Beethoven's music has stimulated a library of explications, commentaries, and analyses for which there is no parallel in any non-Western, nonclassical musical form. For another, the richness and depth of relationships in Beethoven seems to be dependent on a device that has been taken much further in Western music than in any other: notation. And, for a third, Beethoven could refer—again because of notation—to a tradition going back a century, to Bach and Handel, and could, by such references, refine and particularize his musical speech. We might even construe Beethoven's rush—the onward sweep that commonly has to be braked, and released in a mighty coda—as miming the rush of history, from the Baroque on to Brahms and Schoenberg, and as far as Messiaen and Boulez.

The time that is being measured in Beethoven's music is almost always optimistic time, a time in which later means better, and it must be for this reason, as much as for such relatively incidental expressions as the ending of "Fidelio," that his music has commonly been seen as conveying hope. Even in the late sonatas and quartets, endings are consummations; we are a long way from Schubert's ambiguous conclusions, and from the adagio finales of Tchaikovsky and Mahler. This urgency for progress we might recognize as belonging to a phase in Western history that also saw the American and French Revolutions, the beginnings of industrialization, and the origins of organized socialism. But if we still believe in the possibility of progress—political, economic, medical, spiritual—then we participate in the hope to which Beethoven gave a voice; and, to the extent that belief in the possibility of progress has become universal, so has Beethoven's music.

Something else that Beethoven's torrential surging tells us is that we can't stand still. This is music that talks of change, and that itself changes. And here is yet another purpose—indeed, the primary one—of notation: that it enables us to play and hear what is ostensibly the same composition in a myriad ways. Now we reach a matter that isn't sufficiently addressed by our great institutions, since neither at Carnegie nor at Avery Fisher Hall this season will it be possible to hear what's being achieved elsewhere in the revaluation of Beethoven's music through the use of period instruments.

The fact that one can do so on records adds to the sense of loss and missed opportunity one might feel in a year of focussing on Beethoven. For example, the complete set of the symphonies recorded by the Orchestre Révolutionnaire et Romantique, under John Eliot Gardiner, demonstrates surprising qualities in Beethoven—in particular, a humor that abounds, that goes far beyond where it has commonly been located (in the Eighth Symphony, especially), and a conviviality that allows wind solos to stretch as the players wish. Whether these qualities have much to do with early-nineteenth-century practice is a moot point; they seem to me to respond more to modern intuitions and inquiries concerning Beethoven. To find comedy in Beethoven is to counter the reverence of earlier generations of performers, and you don't need period instruments for that; Mr. Taub's reading of Opus 78 is just as funny, with, in the second movement, its hand-to-hand bouts of sixteenth notes and its suggestions of Nancarrow. To make symphonies into symposia is to represent new visions of composition and performance as collaborative acts, in which the composer or the conductor is more the facilitator than the director of what takes place. Again, these visions can be accommodated as well by conventional orchestras as by antique ones—though they're probably less likely to be accommodated in a city where antique orchestras are almost never heard.

If the 1995-96 Beethoven season results only in reinforcing what we thought we knew, it won't have accomplished very much. Certainly one could wish that the Carnegie and Philharmonic plans for Beethoven didn't look pretty much as they might have a quarter of a century ago, in the bicentenary year of 1970. But, with musicians like Mr. Pollini around, we should all be singing the old tunes to a different beat by summer. ♦

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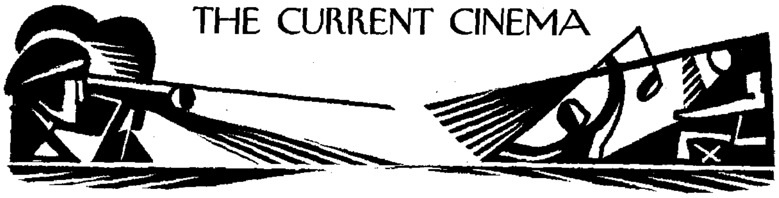


THE CURRENT CINEMA

BLACK EYE

Walter Mosley's detective hero comes to life on-screen.

BY TERRENCE RAFFERTY

EZEKIEL RAWLINS, the hero of four detective novels by Walter Mosley, is one of the most reluctant private eyes in the long history of the genre. He goes by the nickname Easy, and it fits. Trouble is not his business; he's just an ordinary, hardworking black man—a veteran of the Second World War—who's trying to keep up the mortgage payments on his small Los Angeles house. In the opening scenes of Carl Franklin's "Devil in a Blue Dress," which is based on Mosley's first book, we see Easy (Denzel Washington) sitting in a bar in the middle of the day and looking through the want ads; he has been laid off from his job at an aircraft plant and has started to worry about the possibility of losing his home. His desperate financial circumstances make him receptive to the kind of quick-money proposition that he wouldn't normally entertain: a shady-looking white man, DeWitt Albright (Tom Sizemore), offers him a hundred dollars to locate a woman named Daphne Monet, the runaway fiancée of a wealthy local politician. Albright suspects that Daphne is lying low in the black part of town; to find her there, he needs the services of someone like Easy, who knows his way around and can make inquiries discreetly, without slamming into a stone wall of racial mistrust. Fishy as all this sounds to Easy, he accepts the job. A hundred bucks is a hundred bucks, and in his position he can't afford to be too particular about how he earns it.

The story is set in 1948. Both the time and the place evoke the world of Raymond Chandler's famous detective, Philip Marlowe, and it's tempting to think of Mosley's hero as a black Marlowe. Mosley's work is full of homages to the master of hardboiled L.A. crime fiction: the plots of all the Rawlins adventures are dense, murky, and rather chaotic, with either a corpse or a gun-toting goon popping up out of nowhere whenever the action begins to flag or the mystery threatens to become comprehensible; and monikers like DeWitt Albright and Daphne Monet are purest Chandler. (Carl Franklin pays his respects to genre ancestors, too: the movie, especially in its night scenes, borrows some of the death-fragrant atmosphere of Howard Hawks's 1946 Marlowe movie, "The Big Sleep.") But the character of Easy Rawlins feels like a wholly original conception, for the simple reason that he isn't a professional investigator: he has neither the special skills of a trained detective like Marlowe nor anything like Marlowe's dogged, chivalric sense of mission. The sly joke of the books, and of this movie, is that Easy's unique qualifications for the role that has been thrust upon him derive entirely from his blackness. Because he lives in a community that, in 1948, is virtually a separate society—another country—within the United States, he possesses knowledge to which white people have no access: the secrets of what is to them a mysterious, and even impenetrable, culture. Mosley's detective stories are based on the witty perception that to be black in America is *necessarily* to be a private eye—to see what the larger society can't, or won't.

The wary, heroic, reluctant private eye: Denzel Washington as Easy Rawlins.

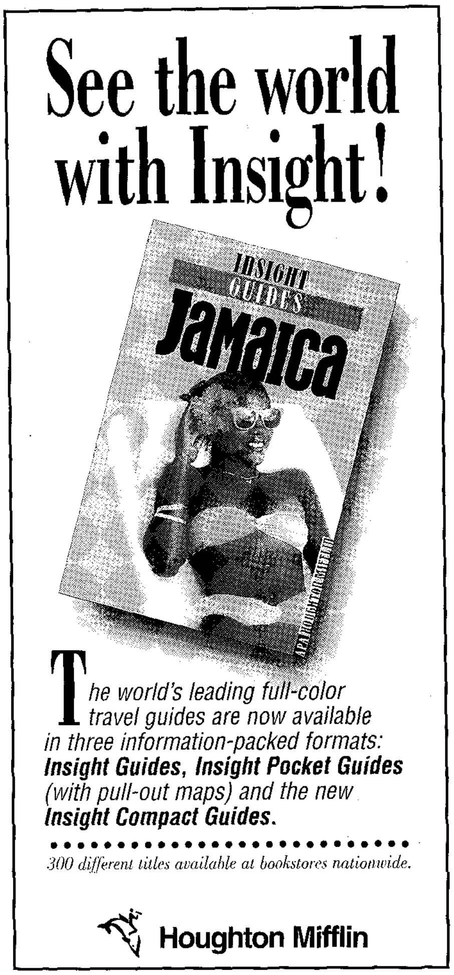
TIM ROWER

"Devil in a Blue Dress" doesn't make a big deal of the social vision that informs its mystery-thriller narrative. The screenplay, by Franklin, streamlines the novel's outrageously convoluted plot, and his elegant direction keeps the picture moving forward at a confident, unhurried pace, which allows the story's ironies to sneak up on us slowly, like the huge, harsh Southern California sun rising on the groggy survivors of a long, sleepless night. When the movie is over, the details of the mystery—who killed whom, and why—fade pretty quickly, but the smoky after-hours mood created by Franklin and his wonderfully subtle cinematographer, Tak Fujimoto, lingers, and so does our sense of the cleverness and the aptness of Mosley's take on the private-eye genre. Chandler, like Hammett before him and Ross Macdonald after, used his tough-guy detective as an instrument to reveal the elusive links between the highest and the lowest levels of society. (What connects them, indissolubly, is their tenacious unwillingness to reveal themselves to outsiders; the thug and the mogul recognize each other as adepts of different cults.) There's an undogmatic awareness of class built into the hardboiled formula. As the private eye shuffles between backstreet dives and mansions on hills, he often discovers that the guns of the underworld have been doing the dirty work of the wealthy and powerful, and when the case is finished he's frequently left with the dismaying realization that he, too, has been manipulated—that the function of his skilled labor is, and always was, to clean up rich folks' messes. "Devil in a Blue Dress" spikes the genre's inherent cynicism with a bitter dash of racial exploitation; in the end, it isn't lost on Easy, or on the audience, that all his perilous, unsought exertions have been in the service of resolving the problems of ambitious whites.

The beauty of the film is that it treats even the most savage implications of the story matter-of-factly. Franklin, who, like Mosley, is black, isn't *shocked* by racism; it's just part of the reality of the characters' lives—something that unfairly limits possibilities for security and happiness without altogether eliminating them. The violent action of "Devil in a Blue Dress" is balanced by the movie's persuasive evocation of the vigorous, lively community that Easy belongs to and (sometimes) draws strength from. A lot of friends are from his original home town, Houston, and they're a funny, varied bunch: there's respectable-looking Odell (Albert Hall), who wears wire-rimmed glasses and gray suits and drinks himself into placid, pleasant stupors; fat, sloppy, sentimental Dupree (Jernard Burks) and his randy girlfriend, Coretta (Lisa Nicole Carson); and Junior (David Wolos-Fonteno), a dim-witted hulk who works as a night-club bouncer. Easy's best, and most alarming, friend is Mouse (Don Cheadle), a dapper little man with a mouth full of gold teeth. He smiles quickly and often, and kills with comparable alacrity. Easy knows that his buddy is a stone psychopath, and he spends an awful lot of energy trying to dissuade Mouse from casual homicide, but the two of them go way back: he can count on Mouse to be on his side. And in Easy's situation there's obviously some benefit in keeping company with a fearless, conscience-less killer.

Cheadle makes his entrance about halfway into the picture, and hits the ground running. His grinning, chattering, twitchy performance is a virtuoso comic turn, a disturbing and hilarious portrayal of feral amorality. But, miraculously, he doesn't overpower the movie or its leading man. Franklin's control of tone is expert; even the introduction of this flamboyantly grotesque element doesn't throw the picture off its stride—it gallops along steadily, refusing to be shaken or surprised. (This director's ability to negotiate sudden plot twists and volatile shifts of mood was part of what made his nifty 1992 suspense sleeper "One False Move" so fresh and so distinctive.) Washington's acting has a similar quality: he takes things as they come. His work in "Devil in a Blue Dress" is deeply satisfying, because he's playing a character whose world view doesn't jibe with contemporary notions of how black men should operate in white society, and he explores Easy's wary, essentially nonconfrontational personality with genuine curiosity and sympathy. He doesn't mock the character as a shuffling, foolish Uncle Tom; nor does he try to curry favor by making Easy more courageous than an amiable, sane black workingman—struggling to make ends meet and to get a little joy out of life—could plausibly have been in the late forties. Washington finds the humor and the quiet heroism in the character's adaptability, and the practical intelligence in his cautious manner. The actor's relaxed star presence works unobtrusively to dispose of any lingering impression that Easy's fear is a sign of weakness. This man looks very, very comfortable with himself, so assured that he doesn't need to swagger. When he's afraid, we feel instinctively that he has good reason to be—that he's careful because he's not stupid.

Fundamentally, "Devil in a Blue Dress" is a modest, skillful, unfussy genre picture that is content to tell an exciting story and to let its more serious concerns remain just below the surface, gently complicating the smooth-flowing rhythms of the narrative. The movie, like its deceptively ordinary hero, gets by on cunning, precision, and a flexible, accommodating kind of determination, and it gives those small virtues the respect that they're entitled to. It's the most enjoyable private-eye movie in a long time, because Mosley and Franklin and Washington have the sense to look for their pleasures within the genre's home ground, on its familiar but not yet exhausted turf. "Devil in a Blue Dress" is an exuberant demonstration of the value of knowing your way around. ♦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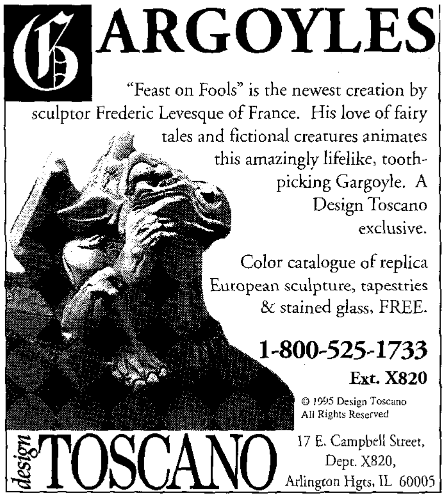
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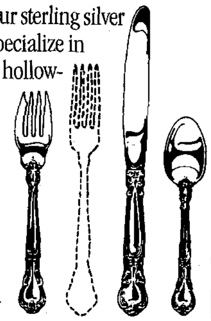

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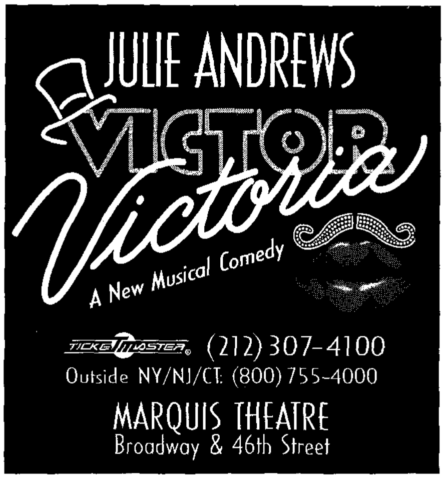

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THE THEATRE

THE GOOD AND FAITHFUL SERVANT

Irish political history becomes personal in a brilliant new play.

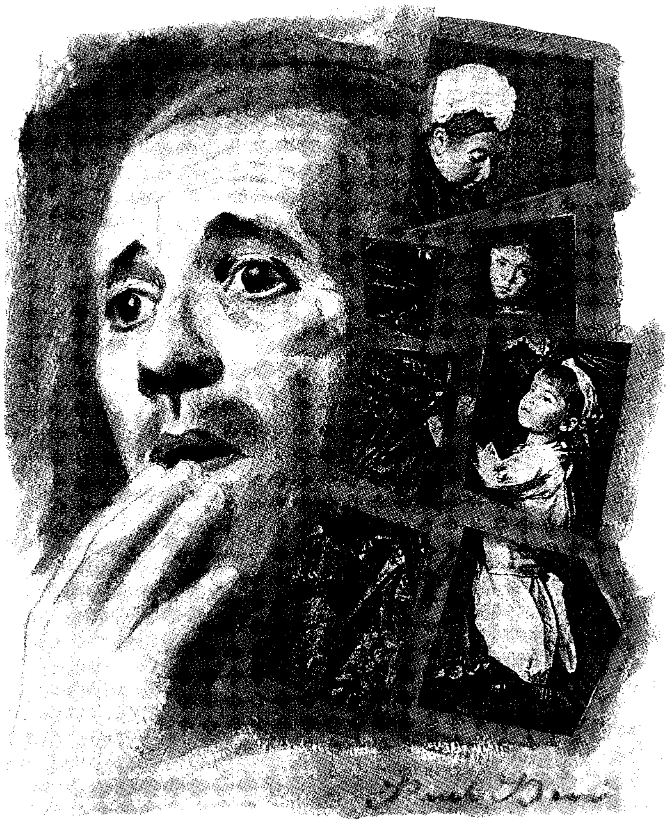
BY JOHN LAHR

A GREAT play, like a great punch, is sometimes hard to see coming, but you know when you've been hit. You are rocked to your toes; and long after the event your body carries the memory of that unforeseen power. The name of the Irish playwright Sebastian Barry is new to me, but it will not be soon forgotten. Barry has written a series of plays that are, he says, "looking for the lost, hidden, or seldom mentioned people in one Irish family"—namely, his own. The fifth, and most recent, of this cycle,"The Steward of Christendom," produced by Out of Joint, is currently being remounted on the main stage of London's Royal Court Theatre after a sold-out run at the Theatre Upstairs this spring. The play is about Barry's controversial and contentious great-grandfather Chief Superintendent Thomas Dunne, a Catholic who was the last head of the now defunct Dublin Metropolitan Police. "In the folklore of Dublin working-class life and Trades' Union history, he hardly holds an enviable place," Barry writes in his notes to the play. "He was the man with the responsibility for Dublin Castle, the very heart of British rule in Ireland." But out of the paradoxical confusions of public and personal loyalties Barry has discerned in Thomas Dunne a metaphor as complex as the times it chronicles—a portrait of a decent man who finds himself swimming against the tide of history, and is drowned by it.

The play takes place in 1932 in the County Wicklow mental home, in Baltinglass. Dunne, played by the magnificent Donal McCann, is in his mid-seventies: it's a decade since his retirement from the force and since Ireland was plunged into civil war. The curtain comes up on Dunne as he wakes in a barren room, apparently regressed to childhood and gabbling "Da Da, Ma Ma, Ba Ba, Ba Ba." He is remembering, he says, his mother's soft breast "when she opens her floating blouse," the shine of his father's "bright boots" in the grass, the smell of clover and of honey in the fields. Dunne, who is from County Wicklow, is rooted in the land; and his tortured soul holds the gladness of the natural world. "Ah, fresh spuds," he says, spooning one up from his bowl of lamb stew, "turned out of the blessed earth like—for all the world like newborn pups." The luminous memories of childhood somehow blend in Dunne's imagination with the comforting omnipotent power of Queen and Empire. "The great world that she owned was shipshape as a ship," says Dunne, who confesses to having loved Queen Victoria "maybe more, or differently," than he did his adored, deceased wife, Cissy. In Dunne's colonized imagination, the Crown has been transformed into a kind of imperial manna-giving family constellation. "We were secure," he goes on about the Queen, "as if for eternity the orderly milk-drays would come up the streets in the morning, and her influence would reach everywhere, like the salt sea pouring into the fresh waters of the Liffey. Ireland was hers for eternity, order was everywhere, if we could but honour her example. She loved her Prince. I loved my wife. The world was a wedding of loyalty."

But in 1922 the social fabric to whose coherence Dunne had devoted his life came apart; the world changed. Nothing, however, could change his devotion to order. He shifted his loyalties from the Crown to Michael Collins, the politician, later assassinated, who in 1921 signed the treaty with London for Irish independence—the treaty that was followed by the separation of the six Northern Counties and led to civil war. "The savagery and ruin that soon followed broke my heart again and again and again," Dunne says. "My streets and squares became places for murder and fire. All that spring and summer, as now and then some brave boy spat at me in the streets, I could not hold back the tide of ruin. It was a personal matter." Dunne takes pride in his achievements ("I had risen as high as a Catholic could"), but to someone like Smith (Kieran Ahern), the caretaker who swabs the old man down, Dunne is a traitor, "a big loyal Catholic gobshite killing poor hungry Irishmen," he tells him to his face. "If you weren't an old madman we'd flay you."

Dunne is driven crazy with regret for what is lost. "My father was the steward of Humewood, and I was the steward of Christendom," he says. "Look at me." He languishes in impotent solitude in a dingy room, on an iron bed with a chamber pot under it. His head is shaved to stubble. He wears a grimy set of long johns. The suggestively backlit barren walls (the superb work of Julian McGowan and Johanna Town) are mottled with shapes as strange and scrambled as Dunne's memory. He is seized by intermittent, terrifying bouts of ranting, which have forced his three daughters—Annie (Tina Kellegher), Maud (Ali White), and Dolly (Aislín McGuckin)—and his grandchildren to keep away from him. Dunne has lost both his public and his private identity; and Barry, his great-grandson, in an extraordinary and poetic act of empathy, restores it to him.



Donal McCann in "The Steward of Christendom."

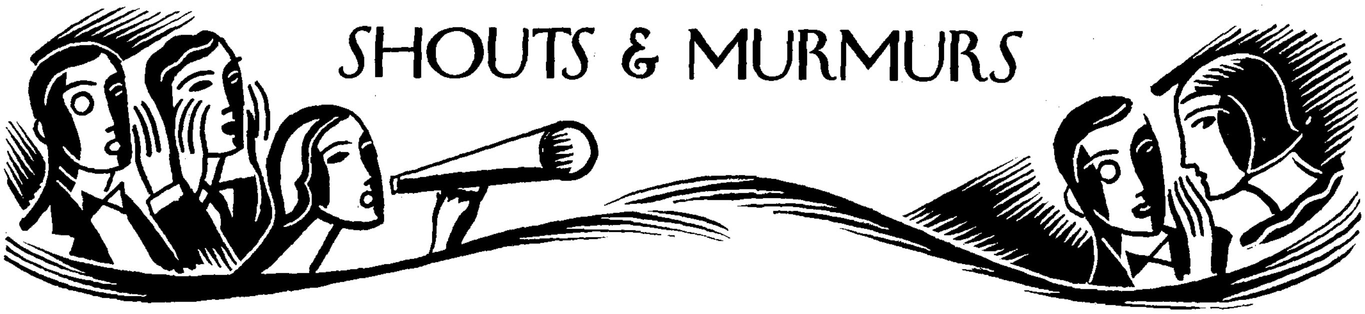
PAUL DAVIS

"I MUST not speak to shadows," Dunne says, but he cannot keep the sorrow or the shadows at bay. Under Max Stafford-Clark's spare, strong direction, these vying punishing worlds—one real, one imagined—materialize and evaporate before our eyes as fleetingly as breath. We see Dunne being dressed by his daughters in the regalia of his authority to take part in Collins's assumption of power; he exits in splendor only to return, seconds later, stripped to his long johns and slapped into a straitjacket for waking the other denizens of the madhouse with his demented claims of visiting Collins. We see him haunted by the presence of his dead son, Willie (Jonathan Newman), whom he encouraged to join the Dublin Rifles, and who went to his grave for a foreign power at the age of eighteen in the First World War. "What big loud talking fools are fathers sometimes," he laments. "Why do we not love our sons simply and be done with it? She did. I would kill, or I would do a great thing just to see you once more, in the flesh." Dunne relives an epiphany about family at the birth of his daughter Dolly, in 1905. He learns that "God himself is in your wife and in your children," that they "hold in trust for you your own measure of goodness," and that "in the manner of your treatment of them lies your own salvation." He ends Act I swearing allegiance and "all the usefulness of my days" to his newborn daughter.

Dunne sees the light, but he doesn't love it enough. In the years following the epiphany, his notion of what is sacramental shifts from the family to the state, so that by the opening of Act II, just as Collins takes power and civil war begins, Dunne's oath of allegiance to Dolly and to family is betrayed. At seventeen, the attractive and impetuous Dolly leaves the family for America. "I want to be liked and loved, but people are cold towards me, Papa," she tells him. Dunne asks why, and Dolly replies, "Because—because of you, Papa, I suppose." Dunne's distressing collapse forces Maud into her own neurasthenic world, and turns Annie, with whom he retires to the country, bitter. "It was like living with Hannibal in Abyssinia, when Hannibal was a leader no more," Annie says of three nightmarish years they spent in the village of Kiltegan. The spectacle of Dunne's paranoid frenzy in front of his daughter—the episode that gets him removed to the county home—is brilliantly conjured up in Act II. Dunne grabs his sword to take arms against the revolutionaries, whom he sees as outlaw vermin, and who, in his dementia, turn into rats infesting his house. He slashes at them recklessly, finally handing the blade to Annie and dropping to his knees. "Bring it down on top of me like I was brambles, with all your might," he says. Annie grabs the sword away from him and raises it furiously above her head. The stage directions read, "Maybe she considers using it for a moment." Annie bolts in humiliation and fury from the room.

Dunne is left on his knees like an infant, babbling the same baby talk with which he began the play. Willie appears to him and holds out his hand, but Dunne, so used to talking to shadows, disbelieves his eyes. "Oh, Willie—the great appear great because we are on our knees. Let us rise," Dunne says, and at the finale he is both literally and symbolically uplifted. They reach tentatively toward each other—a gesture that traverses time and madness—until the flesh of the father and the flesh of the son finally touch. The sense of longing and loss is too big for words. Willie is incarnate—a miracle of imagination and of theatre, a redemptive dream come true. Dunne is helped to his feet and onto his bed. Then, with his son lying motionless beside him, Dunne dozes off; and, as the lights fade, the son's arm slowly moves across his father's sleeping body and holds him tight. The play that began with the memory of an embrace ends in an actual one. In this elegiac final image, Barry and this expert production seem to suggest that, although contemporary history will not forgive Dunne, he has forgiven himself. "It's all topsy-turvy, Willie," Dunne says toward the end of the play. And he is right. He learns too late that his fierce dedication to Queen and Empire was a public substitute for the enduring power, acceptance, and grace of the parental embrace. ♦

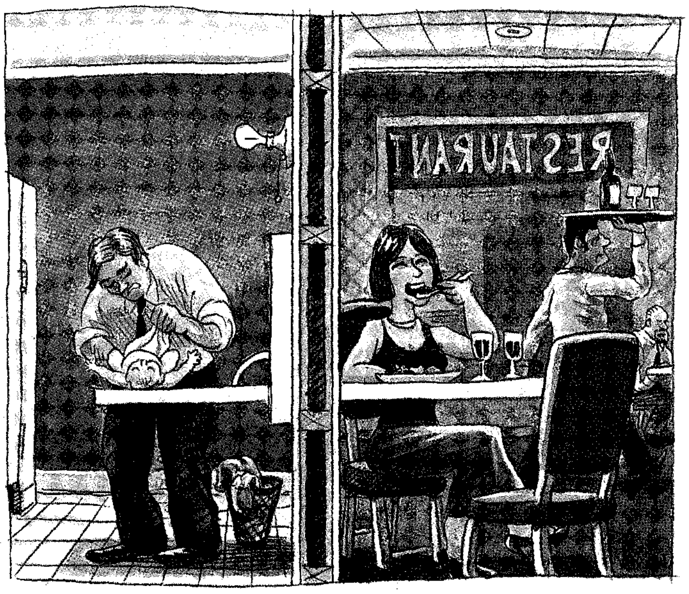
SHOUTS & MURMURS



TURNING THE TABLES

BY CALVIN TRILLIN

I'M afraid the fact that I was in a men's room at the time is germane. This was just off Interstate 84, east of Hartford. Driving through New England, my wife and I had stopped at a franchise restaurant. As I was about to leave the men's room, I glanced at an unfamiliar object on the wall and suddenly realized that it was a pull-down diaper-changing table. In the men's room.



My first thought was that the presence of a diaper-changing table in the men's room might have been a fluke. It might have reflected a gesture by a single corporation, made because the vice-president of customer services happens to be a modern woman or happens to be what my daughters used to call a SNAG—a college acronym for a "sensitive new-age guy." Evidence against the fluke theory presented itself that very day in a men's room a few hours down the road and, not long after that, in a men's room on a car ferry. At that point, I heard myself mumbling, "It's here, guys. It's here."

The next time I spotted a changing table, it had a logo on it that showed a picture of a koala below the words Koala Bear Kare. My friend Pierre had been visiting us, and I'd driven him to the airport to get a plane home. We walked into the men's room at the airport together. He saw Koala Bear Kare at the same time I did. He didn't seem alarmed. Pierre's children, like my children, are grown. For both of us, grandchildren remain hypothetical.

I nodded toward Koala Bear Kare. "I assume you're checked out," I said. That was the phrase we always used in our house for anyone who had some experience in diapering. It made being a practiced nappie-swapper sound sort of like having a security clearance.

"Oh, sure," he said. "And I know you're checked out."

"Yes, of course," I said. Even when Pierre and I were young fathers, a forward-looking male knew that if he didn't participate in that elementary aspect of baby-raising he might be robbing himself of the opportunity to say, during a stressful family conversation fifteen or twenty years down the road, "I changed *your diapers!*"

"I'm checked out on changing diapers," Pierre said. "But I might have a little trouble figuring out how to get that gizmo down out of the wall."

"On the other hand," I said, "it seems to me that there was a time when you were concerned about your ability to master a dishwashing machine. And now you're noted for glassware that twinkles with that sparkling shine."

I would think that most modern fathers are checked out. But I would also think that a lot of modern fathers—some SNAGs among them—have considered themselves more or less off duty when the family's eating out. In fact, it wouldn't surprise me if some of them had polished the gesture they use in public when the baby is in obvious need of changing—a sort of apologetic shrug, communicating both regret at not being able to shoulder the burden this time and helplessness in the face of a world organized to assign changing tables only to women's rooms.

If my recent experience is any guide, the world is no longer organized that way. I can't help wondering how this will affect families. I can't help wondering how it will affect men's rooms. Traditionally, the atmosphere in men's rooms is a little—well, edgy. Will the presence of a cooing baby being powdered loosen things up? Will strangers now stop by the Koala Bear Kare table, say something like "Cute little booger," and fall into a conversation about diaper-rash remedies?

I also can't help wondering why I hadn't heard about this before. I try to keep up. Is it possible that men—presumably the only people who use the men's room—have consciously kept mum about the availability of changing tables? If so, I hope they are not laboring under the misapprehension that there is a realistic possibility of keeping this secret. What they ought to be doing is polishing a new gesture—a cheerful smile that goes along with saying, "Let me get this one, honey. You finish your chicken fajita while it's still hot." It's here, guys. It's here. ♦

DOUG ALLEN

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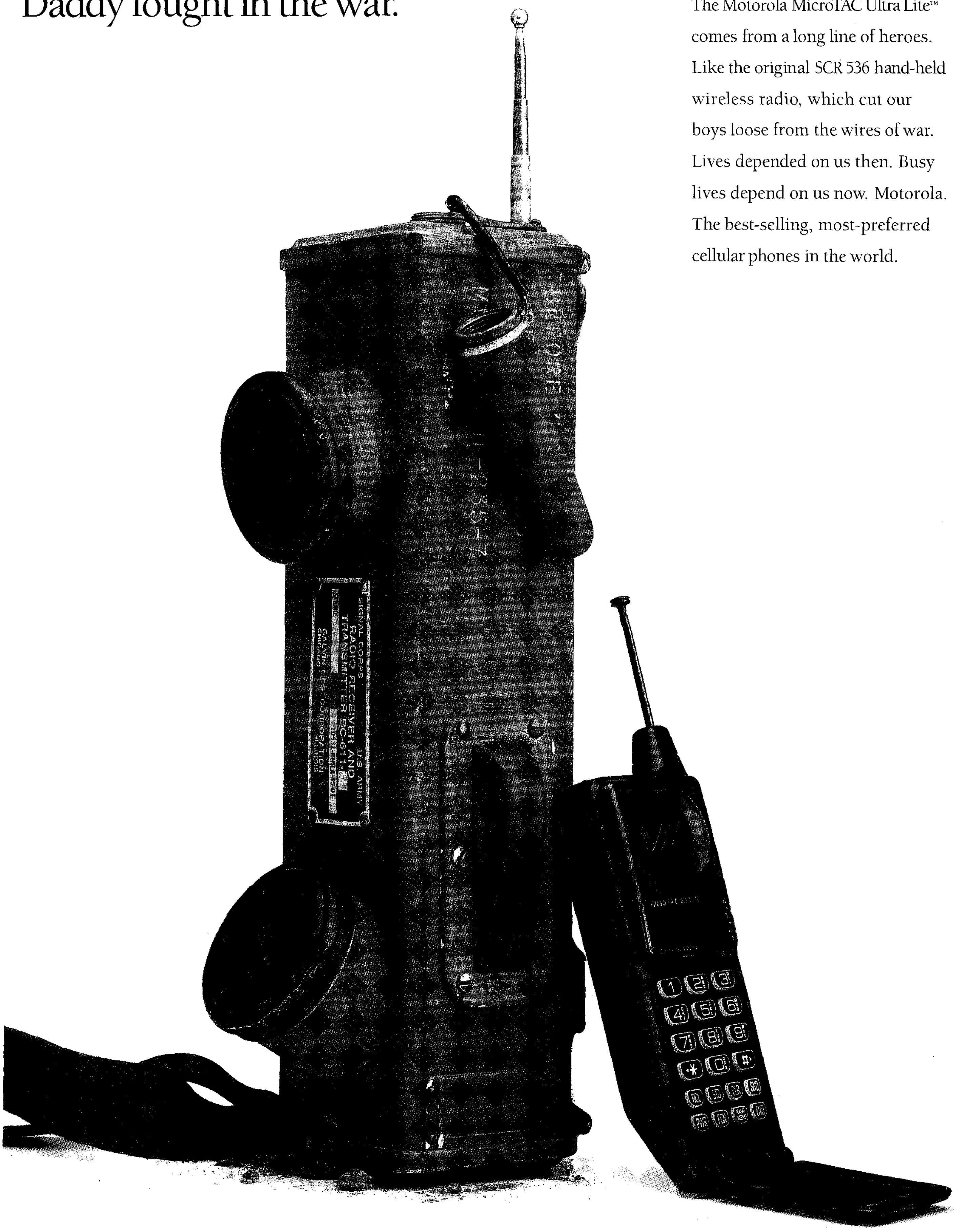
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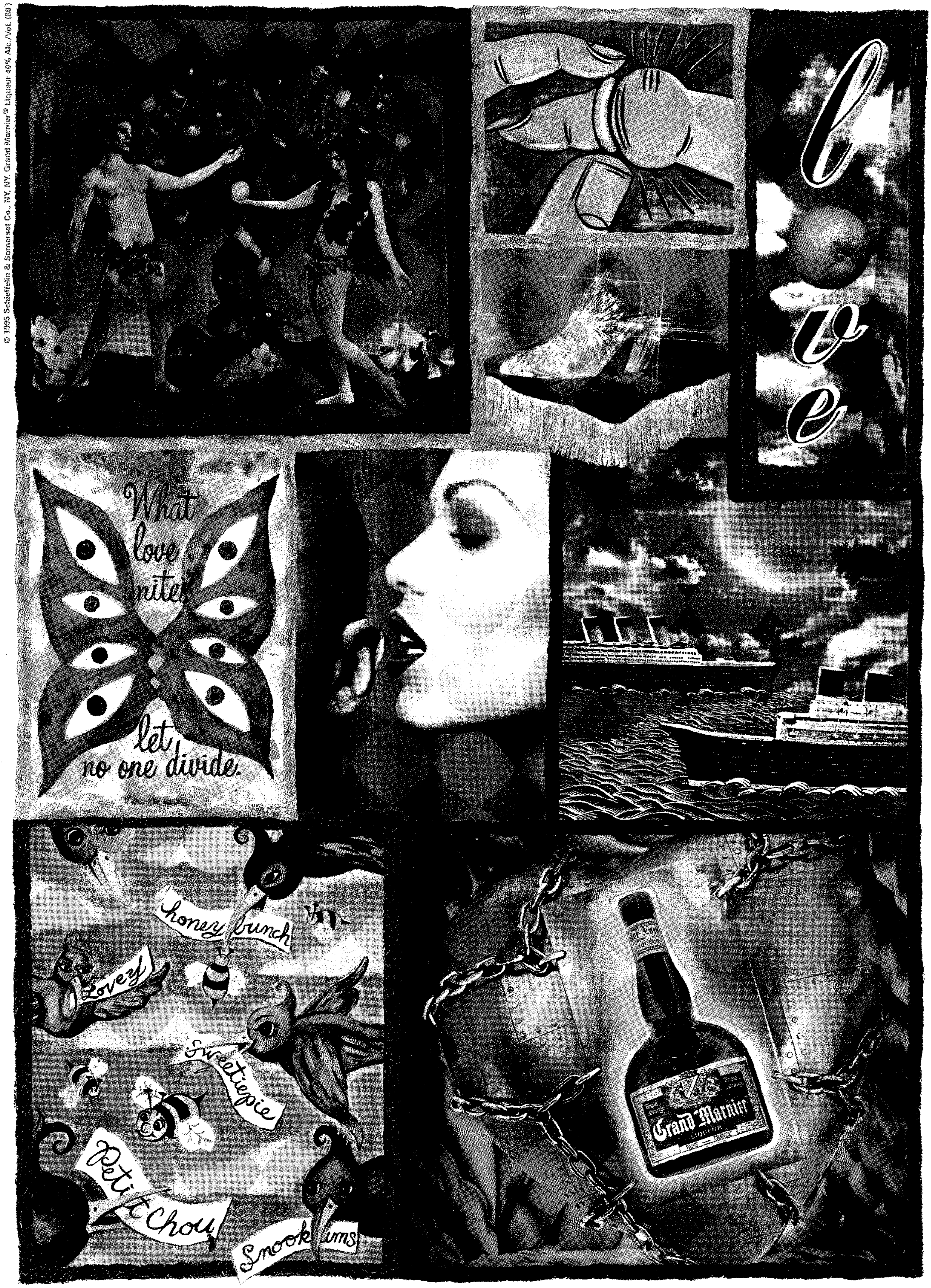
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